STREET & SMITH'S

UNKNOWN

NOVEMBER · 1940 TWENTY CENTS

FANTASY FICTION

CARGO . . . . . Theodore Sturgeon

She was an old ship, and scarred in her age till none of them could tell. Then she became a madhouse, with canned milk running out as ink or blood—the sextants all reading the same, yet every one of them broken!

The GODS GO MADE . . . . . Ross Rocklynne

He wasn't [illegible] who [illegible] nodded [illegible] little figures out of wax from dictating machine records—but he found it made Gabriel some very talkative—and terrifically troublesome!—godlings!

CARTWRIGHT'S CAMERA . . Nelson S. Bond

Johnny owned the camera—and Dopey dropped it. After that its lenses and prisms weren't quite what they were, and when Johnny tried to photograph things with it he got strange results. Very strange. [illegible]

TYPEWRITER IN THE *Sky* by L. Ron Hubbard

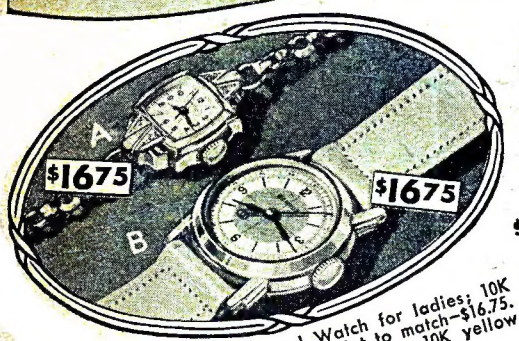
A man put his friend in a story—and really put him in!

Let me help you give fine GIFTS
I'll trust you – I'll give you 10 MONTHS *to Pay*

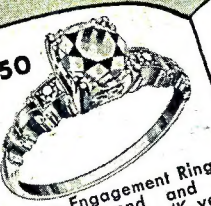
SEND ME $1 – I'll send your choice of these Special Selections for 10 DAY TRIAL on my MONEY BACK Guarantee . . . . .

I'll help you give fine gifts. Tell me what you want—put a dollar bill in an envelope with your name, address, occupation and a few other facts about yourself. I'll send your selection for approval and 10-day trial. If you are not satisfied that you have received good, honest value send it back and I'll promptly return your dollar. If satisfied pay in 10 small monthly payments.

Jim Feeney
Sales Mgr.



A-T566—Benrus Sweepsecond Watch for ladies; 10K yellow rolled gold plate; bracelet to match—$16.75.
B-0565—Benrus Sweepsecond for men; 10K yellow rolled gold plate; leather strap, $16.75.
$1.58 a month

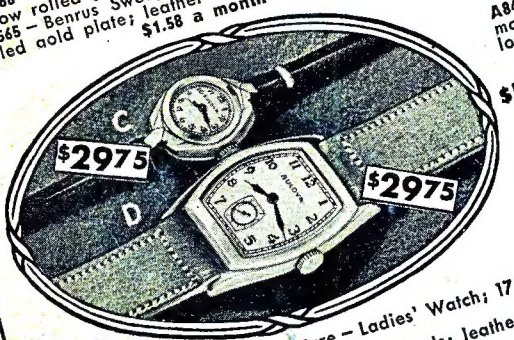


$48.50

A265—Engagement Ring; large diamond and 2 other diamonds; 14K yellow gold. **$4.75 a month**

$33.50

A84/C75—Bridal Set; 8 diamonds; both rings 14K yellow gold. **$5.15 a month**



C-R154—Bulova's newest feature—Ladies' Watch; 17 jewel "Goddess of Time"—$29.75.
D-M134—Bulova feature for men; 17 jewels; leather strap—$29.75.
$2.38 a month

$16.95

1154—Man's Initial Ring; diamond and 2 initials on Black Onyx; 10K yellow gold. **$1.60 a month**

E-P159—Ladies' Kent Watch; 7 jewels; newest style 10K yellow rolled gold plate case—$15.95.
F-K190—Man's Kent Watch; 7 jewels; sturdy; new style; 10 yellow rolled gold plate case—$15.95.
$1.50 a month

$29.75

Railroad style; 17 jewel Elgin; yellow gold color case. **$2.88 a month**

FREE T ADUL

Send for complete 48 page Catalog showing big selection diamonds, watches, jewelry, silverware—all on my 10 Months-To-Pay-Plan.

L. W. Sweet

MAIL ORDER DIVISION OF FINLAY STRAUS, Inc.

Dept. 120 J 1670 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

"SELDOM SEE AN I. C. S. GRADUATE OUT OF A JOB"

"IN ALL THE YEARS I have known of the International Correspondence Schools, I have seldom seen one of your graduates jobless."

A business executive made this statement in a recent letter commenting on the I. C. S. graduates and students in his employ and expressing regrets that it was necessary to reduce his personnel.

"However," he added, "all I. C. S. graduates and students will be retained, for I fully realize their value in my business."

• •

The reason so many I. C. S. men have jobs is because they are *trained men!* A recent investigation into the working conditions of 1000 I. C. S. students revealed only ten unemployed. You, too, can be an I. C. S. man.

Mark the coupon and mail it today! It has been the most important act in the lives of thousands of men.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

BOX 4901-L, SCRANTON, PENNA.

★ Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, "Who Wins and Why," and full particulars about the course *before* which I have marked X: ★

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

☐ Agriculture ☐ Air Brake	☐ Cotton Manufacturing	☐ Marine Engines	☐ R. R. Signalmen's ☐ Refrigeration
☐ Air Conditioning	☐ Diesel Engines	☐ Mechanical Drafting	☐ Sanitary Engineering
☐ Architectural Drafting	☐ Electrical Engineering	☐ Mechanical Engineering	☐ Sheet Metal Work
☐ Architecture	☐ Electric Lighting	☐ Mine Foreman	☐ Steam Electric
☐ Auto Engine Tune-up	☐ Fire Bosses	☐ Navigation	☐ Steam Engines
☐ Auto Technician	☐ Fruit Growing ☐ Heating	☐ Patternmaking	☐ Steam Fitting
☐ Aviation ☐ Boilermaking	☐ Heat Treatment of Metals	☐ Pharmacy ☐ Plumbing	☐ Structural Drafting
☐ Bridge Engineering	☐ Highway Engineering	☐ Poultry Farming	☐ Structural Engineering
☐ Building Estimating	☐ House Planning	☐ Practical Telephony	☐ Surveying and Mapping
☐ Chemistry	☐ Locomotive Engineer	☐ Public Works Engineering	☐ Telegraph Engineering
☐ Civil Engineering	☐ Machinist	☐ Radio, General	☐ Textile Designing
☐ Coal Mining	☐ Management of Inventions	☐ Radio Operating	☐ Toolmaking
☐ Concrete Engineering	☐ Managing Men at Work	☐ Radio Servicing	☐ Welding, Electric and Gas
☐ Contracting and Building	☐ Manufacture of Pulp Paper	☐ R. R. Section Foreman	☐ Woolen Manufacturing

BUSINESS COURSES

☐ Accounting ☐ Advertising	☐ Civil Service	☐ First Year College	☐ Railway Postal Clerk
☐ Bookkeeping	☐ College Preparatory	☐ Foremanship	☐ Salesmanship ☐ Secretarial
☐ Business Correspondence	☐ Commercial	☐ French ☐ Grade School	☐ Service Station Salesmanship
☐ Business Management	☐ Cost Accounting	☐ High School ☐ Illustrating	☐ Sign Lettering ☐ Spanish
☐ Cartooning	☐ C. P. Accounting	☐ Lettering Show Cards	☐ Traffic Management

DOMESTIC SCIENCE COURSES

☐ Advanced Dressmaking ☐ Home Dressmaking ☐ Tea Room and Cafeteria Management, Catering
☐ Foods and Cookery ☐ Professional Dressmaking and Designing

Name.....*Age*.....*Address*.....

City.....*State*.....*Present Position*.....

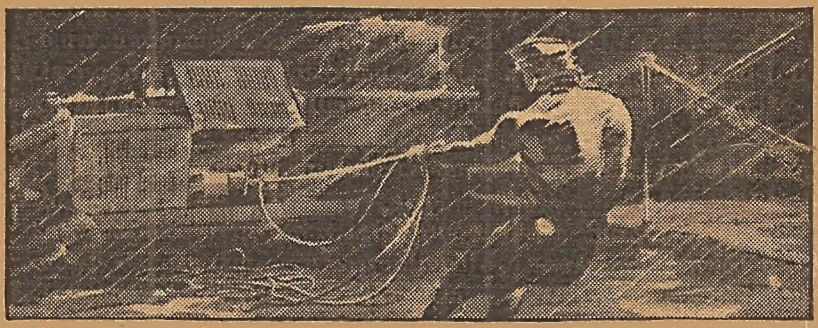
Canadian residents send coupon to International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada
British residents send coupon to I. C. S., 71 Kingsway, London, W. C. 2, England

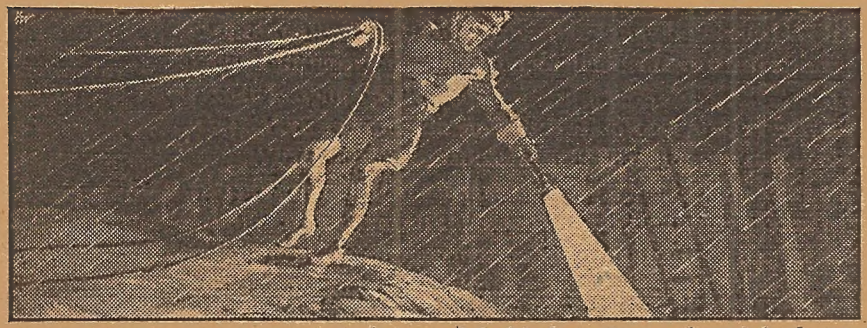
ONE MORE STEP— AND ETERNITY!

A true experience of LYLE EMMONS, *Kildare, New York*

"THE WIND HOWLED and the darkness seemed to increase as I arrived at the quarry, where I was to do a welding job on a big steam shovel," writes Mr. Emmons. "The rain streamed down in slanting torrents.

"IN THAT DRIVING STORM I had to move slowly about, walking with my back to the wind and tugging at my heavy gear. Then suddenly I had a horrible, sickening sensation of danger.





"I GRABBED MY FLASHLIGHT and swung it behind me. I peered straight down a 90 foot drop to a pile of jagged rocks! You can tell the world that I was thankful for my flashlight and its dependable 'Eveready' *fresh* DATED batteries. I'll never be without them!

(Signed) *Lyle Emmons*"

The word "Eveready" is a registered trade-mark of National Carbon Co., Inc.

FRESH BATTERIES LAST LONGER... *Look for the* DATE-LINE

NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, INC., 30 EAST 42nd STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.

Unit of Union Carbide UCC *and Carbon Corporation*

STREET & SMITH'S

UNKNOWN

TITLE REGISTERED U. S. PATENT OFFICE

CONTENTS FOR NOVEMBER, 1940 VOL. IV NO. 3

The editorial contents of this magazine have not been published before, are protected by copyright and cannot be reprinted without the publisher's permission.

NOVEL

TYPEWRITER IN THE SKY . . . **L. Ron Hubbard** . . **9**

Part One of Two Parts

It was to be a rip-roaring story of Caribbean piracy, and his friend would make a fine villain—so he put him in the story. And—the friend had to live that tale!

NOVELETTE

CARGO . . . . . **Theodore Sturgeon** . . **82**

The old tramp freighter had carried many things, but not so cockeyed a cargo as that! The ship was hexed, enchanted, pixilated and generally the home of the weird!

SHORT STORIES

THE GODS GIL MADE . . . . **Ross Rocklynne** **68**

He didn't intend to, but when he turned dictating-machine record scrapings into little godlets—ye gods how they talked!

CARTWRIGHT'S CAMERA . . . **Nelson S. Bond** **104**

"Dopey" dropped it, whereafter it would take pictures all right—but not the pictures Cartwright meant to take!

THE BLEAK SHORE . . . . . **Fritz Leiber, Jr.** . . . **111**

Two adventurers wander half across a world of long ago to a strange and terrible land—.

ARE YOU THERE? . . . . . **Mona Farnsworth** . . . **120**

A ghost was a blamed nuisance to the girl—particularly when she found that none of the traditional ghost-laying formulas worked. So she invented a new kind—

SERIAL

THE TOMMYKNOCKER . . . . **Thomas Calvert McClary** **131**

Conclusion

Magic money—a hundred dollars a day!—goes to prove that if wishes were horses, and beggars could ride, they'd still suffer from saddle sores!

READERS' DEPARTMENTS

OF THINGS BEYOND **6**

Editorial Prophecy and Future Issues.

—AND HAVING WRIT— **156**

The Readers speak their minds.

Illustrations by: Cartier, Gilmore, Isip and Kramer

All stories in this magazine are fiction. No actual persons are designated either by name or character. Any similarity is coincidental.

Monthly publication issued by Street & Smith Publications, Incorporated, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Allen L. Grammer, President; Ormond V. Gould, Vice President; Henry W. Ralston, Vice President; Gerald H. Smith, Treasurer and Secretary. Copyright, 1940, in U. S. A. and Great Britain by Street & Smith Publications, Inc. Entered as Second-class Matter, February 21, 1939, at the Post Office at New York, under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Subscriptions to Canada and Countries in Pan American Union, $2.25 per year; elsewhere, $2.75 per year. We cannot accept responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. Any material submitted must include return postage.

Printed in [redacted] the U. S. A.

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE OCTOBER 25th $2 A YEAR 20c per COPY

STREET & SMITH PUBLICATIONS, INC. • 79 7th AVE., NEW YORK

OF THINGS BEYOND

A GERMAN professor of history, Dr. Schatz, some years ago prepared what probably ranks as the world's greatest collection of data on abnormalities in human structure, an avocation that at first glance seems slightly strange for an historian. The gentleman was interested in that great pastime of "explaining" things; in this case, the Greek gods.

Occasionally, humans are born as Siamese twins, and sometimes, even more rarely, a further blending of two individuals occurs to produce a double-headed man, or a man with two pairs of legs or two pairs of arms. There's a somewhat spine-chilling account of an East Indian example, a—or some—man—or men—having two heads and one body. Both heads were individuals—and they didn't particularly like each other. They used to argue angrily.

That would, no doubt, make a rather permanent impression on people who were building a mythology. A man born with two pairs of legs would give rise to Centaur legends, perhaps.

But there is a great deal of Greek and Roman mythology unexplained; some highly interesting points about changeable beasts are permanent and widespread features of nearly all the world's myths.

That theme of changeable beasts—beasts that are men and yet are something else—is one of the most widespread and persistent of all the myths. The Polynesians have it in their myths, it appears in Greek, Roman, Slavic, Norse, and Oriental myths. It's in American Indian mythology, too.

Maybe there *were* changeable people? It's strange that all the world had the same idea if there was no truth in it. And maybe—

Well, Jack Williamson, next month, has some delightfully unsettling suggestions to make. He has the lead novel in the December Unknown, and it involves a forgotten race of men, a race that, like *Homo Neanderthalis,* is now extinct—*Homo lycanthropus,* the werewolf man.

The story is titled "Darker Than You Think." Maybe it is, you know.

They recreated the ancient, long-extinct European aurochs by a little judicious inbreeding of modern European cattle strains. For lo! the ancient savage strains still lived, buried under less vicious, less powerful strains.

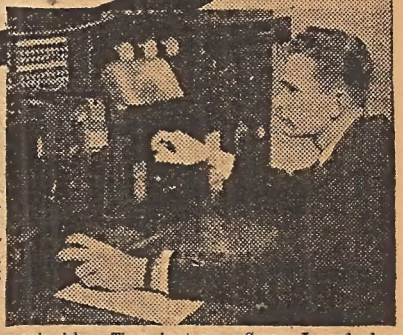
Maybe it is—"Darker Than You Think"!

THE EDITOR.

Make me Prove

THAT I CAN TRAIN YOU AT HOME FOR A Good Job in Radio

I TRAINED THESE MEN



Clip the coupon and mail it. I'm certain I can train you at home in your spare time to be a Radio Technician. I will send you a sample lesson free. Examine it, read it, see how clear and easy it is to understand. See how my course is planned to help you get a good job in Radio, a young growing field with a future. You needn't give up your present job or spend a lot of money to become a Radio Technician. I train you at home nights in your spare time.

Why Many Radio Technicians Make $30, $40, $50 a Week

Radio Broadcasting stations employ Radio Technicians as operators, maintenance men, etc. Radio manufacturers employ testers, inspectors, servicemen in good-pay jobs. Radio jobbers and dealers employ installation and servicemen. Many Radio Technicians open their own Radio sales and repair businesses and make $30, $40, $50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make $5 to $10 a week fixing Radios in spare time. Automobile, police, aviation, commercial Radio; loudspeaker systems, electronic devices, are other fields offering opportunities for which N. R. I. gives the required knowledge of Radio. Television promises to open good jobs soon.

Many Make $5 to $10 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning!

The day you enroll, in addition to my regular Course, I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets—start showing you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your Course I send plans and directions which have helped many make $5 to $10 a week in spare time while learning. I send special Radio equipment to conduct experiments and build circuits. This 50-50 training method makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. YOU ALSO GET A MODERN, PROFESSIONAL ALL-WAVE, ALL-PURPOSE SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make more money fixing Radios while learning and equip you for full time work after you graduate.

Find Out What Radio, Television Offer

Act today. Mail the coupon for Sample Lesson and my 64-page Book "Rich Rewards in Radio." They point out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tell about my Course in Radio and Television; show more than 100 letters from men I trained telling what they are doing and earning. Read my money back agreement. Find out what Radio and Television offer you. MAIL COUPON in an envelope, or paste on a postcard—NOW!

J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute,
Dept. OJD
Washington, D. C.

$10 TO $20 A WEEK IN SPARE TIME

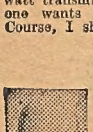
I repaired some Radio sets when I was on my tenth lesson. I really don't see how you can give so much for such a small amount of money. I made $600 in a year and a half, and I have made an average of $10 to $20 a week—just spare time.

JOHN JERRY
1529 Arapahoe St.
Denver, Colorado

WORKS FOR STATE OF ILLINOIS

If I had not taken your Course I might still be doing odd jobs or digging ditches. I am working for the State of Illinois operating the 1,000 watt transmitter. If anyone wants to write me about your Course, I shall be glad to answer.

R. S. LEWIS
1901 S. Pasfield
Springfield, Ill.



$200 TO $300 A MONTH IN OWN BUSINESS

For the last two years I have been in business for myself making between $200 to $300 a month. Business has steadily increased. I have N. R. I. to thank for my start in this field.

ARLIE J. FROEHNER
300 W. Texas Ave., Goose Creek, Texas

THIS FREE BOOK Has Helped Hundreds of Men Make More Money

GOOD FOR BOTH 64 PAGE BOOK SAMPLE LESSON FREE

J. E. SMITH, President, National Radio Institute
Dept. OJD, Washington, D. C.

Mail me FREE without obligation, Sample Lesson and 64-page book "Rich Rewards in Radio" which tells about Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and how I can train at home for them. (No salesman will call. Write Plainly.)

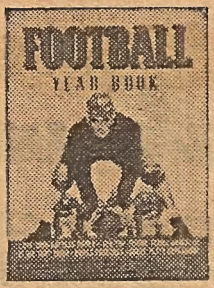
Age.....

Name.....

Address .....

City..... State.....2FR3

How your own team can win with the touchdown plays of Harvard, Columbia, Notre Dame, Michigan and Minnesota



This famous cycle of team maneuvers can now be used by any high school or sand-lot team. Any one or all of these touchdown scoring plays can be adapted to your team's style of play.

HERE ARE THE PLAYS:

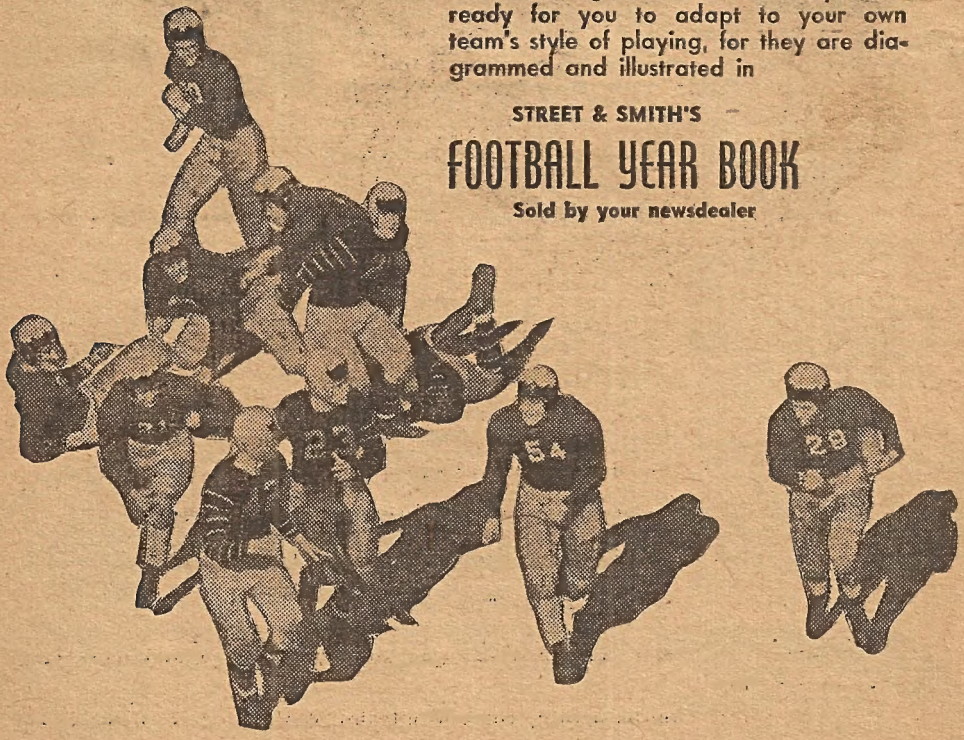
HARVARD'S NAKED REVERSE
NOTRE DAME'S SPIN BUCK
MINNESOTA'S RAZZLE-DAZZLE
COLUMBIA'S FAMOUS KF-79
MICHIGAN'S POWER BLAST

Your team can play like a champion with plays that have been consistently successful in scoring touchdowns. They're all ready for you to adapt to your own team's style of playing, for they are diagrammed and illustrated in

STREET & SMITH'S

FOOTBALL YEAR BOOK

Sold by your newsdealer



First of Two Parts

TYPEWRITER IN THE SKY

by L. RON HUBBARD

An author put his friend in a story of Caribbean piracy—as the villain! And the friend could not get out, was forced to live that story!

Illustrated by Edd Cartier

HORACE HACKETT, as one of his gangster characters would have said, was on the spot.

About three months before, Jules Montcalm of Vider Press had handed to Horace Hackett the sum of five hundred dollars, an advance against royalties of a novel proposed but not yet composed. And Horace Hackett, being

an author, had gayly spent the five hundred and now had nothing but a hangover to present to Jules Montcalm. It was, as one of Horace Hackett's heroes would have said, a nasty state of affairs. For, be it known, publishers, when they have advanced sums against the writing of a book, are in no mood for quibbling, particularly when said book is listed in the fall catalogue and as there were just two months left in which it could be presented to the public.

Horace Hackett was popular but not popular enough to get away with anything like that. He wrote novels of melodramatic adventure for Vider Press, at about the rate of one a year—though he also wrote gang stories for Pubble House and love stories for Duffin & Co. Just now Horace Hackett was furiously fumbling with facts in an attempt to explain to Jules Montcalm just why it was that no manuscript had arrived as per contract.

Jules Montcalm, being a publisher, did not believe authors. In fact, it is doubtful if Jules Montcalm ever believed anything beyond the fact that he was probably the one genius in the book business. He had, let us say, a suspicious eye. This he had focused upon Horace Hackett and Horace Hackett squirmed.

They were in the living room of Horace Hackett's Greenwich Village basement studio apartment, a darkish place well padded with sheets of forgotten manuscripts, unanswered letters from bill collectors, notes from the ex-wife's lawyer asking for alimony, empty brandy bottles, broken pencils, a saddle somebody had sent from New Mexico, several prints of furious revolutionary battles, three covers from some of Horace's magazine serials, crumpled packages of cigarettes—all empty—a stack of plays somebody had sent—just knowing that Horace could advise about them—newspapers which dated back to the tenth battleship Germany had claimed to have sunk, a number of scatter rugs from Colombia, where they had begun life as saddle pads, three empty siphons, a dun from the company which had foolishly financed Horace Hackett's car and a piano at which sat Michael de Wolf.

Horace Hackett did not appear disturbed. In fact, he was airy. This thing, his attitude plainly said, was a mere bagatelle. Why, the business of dashing off that novel was so simple and could be done so quickly that one wondered why another one should think twice about it. But down deep, under his soiled bathrobe, Horace Hackett knew that he had never been closer to getting caught.

Mike de Wolf, at the piano, was grandly oblivious of the pair. His slender fingers were caressing a doleful dirge from the stained keys, a very quiet accompaniment to his own state of mind. Mike had a chance to audition the following morning, but he was pretty certain that he would fail. He always had, hadn't he?

JULES MONTCALM, with the air of a hunter who has just treed a mountain lion and is now training his rifle to bop it out of the branches, leveled a finger at Horace.

"I don't believe," said Jules Montcalm—whose real name was Julius Berkowitz—"that you even have a plot for it!"

"Heh, heh, heh," said Horace hollowly. "Not even a plot. Heh, heh. That is very funny. Mike, he doesn't even think I've got a plot for this novel!"

"Well," said Mike de Wolf, not turning, "have you?" And he ran into a more mournful set of chords than before.

"Heh, heh. You don't think for a minute that Mike means that, do you, Jules? Why, of course I've got a plot!"

"Uh-huh," said Jules. "I bet you can't even begin to tell me about that plot!"

"Here, have another drink," said Horace, getting hurriedly up and pulling his dirty bathrobe about him while he poured Jules another drink.

"Well, if you got a plot, then why don't you tell it to me and stop saying 'heh, heh, heh'!" Jules had scored.

Horace sat in the chair, still airy, and he managed to put an enthusiastic light behind his pale-blue eyes. He leaned forward. "Why, this is one of the greatest stories I ever did! It's marvelous. It's got everything! Drama, character, color—"

"The plot," said Jules.

"It's sparkling and exciting, and the love interest is so tender—"

"The plot," said Jules.

"—that I almost cried myself thinking it up. Why, it's a grand story! Flashing rapiers, tall ships, brave men—"

"I already said that in the catalogue," said Jules hopelessly. "Now I want to hear the plot. I bet you ain't got any plot at all!"

"Mike! Here I am telling him the greatest story ever written—"

"You haven't written it yet," said Mike without turning.

"He's a great kidder," said Horace to Jules. "Heh, heh."

"The plot," said Jules.

"Why, sure. I was just going to tell you. It's about pirates. Not pirates, you understand, but buccaneers. Back in the days when England and France were fighting for a toehold on the Caribbean and the dons had it all sewed up. Back about sixteen hundred, just after the time of Drake—"

"We got all that in the catalogue," said Jules. "The plot!"

"Well, it's about a fellow called Tom Bristol," said Horace, thinking so hard that he squinted. "Yes, sir, it's about a fellow named Tom Bristol. A go-to-hell, swashbuckling, cut-'em-down, brawny guy who's the younger son of a noble family in England. He's a gentleman, see? But when he gets into the King's navy he don't like the admiral, and when he's given command of a ship he fights the battle his own way, and that makes the admiral mad, and so they cache Tom Bristol from the service, even though he won the fight for them. He's too smart for them, see? And he's too hotheaded for the discipline, and so his old man, the duke, boots him out and tells him never to come back."

"Like all the other pirate novels you've written," sighed Jules.

"Like— Say, don't you think I've got artistic temperament? Do you think I've got just one story? Why, the sales on my last book—"

"Don't try to get out of this by getting mad," said Jules. "The plot! His old man, the duke, kicks him out—so what?"

"WHY, so he comes to the New World. Out to St. Kitts. And there he runs into this girl. Her old man is the merchant prince of the English. He's got stacks of money that he's made by trafficking with the buccaneers, and he's really kingpin in the West Indies. And because society in St. Kitts was very swell, why his daughter is there with him."

"With blond hair and blue eyes and very sweet—" said Jules hopelessly.

"No!" said Horace, thinking faster. "Hell, no! She's a wild cat, see? She's turned down half the lords in England because she's looking for somebody that's really a man. She can ride to hounds and shoot better'n a musketeer, and she's a gambling fool. And she figures all these noblemen are just soft-bellied bums. No, sir, she'll never give her hand to any guy that can't beat her at any game she tackles, and she's never met such a guy. So—"

"Well, that's different enough for a heroine," said Jules. "But you know what they always say. It takes a good villain to make a story. And if you go making the villain like you did in 'Song of Arabia,' people are going to say you're slipping. Now a good villain—"

"That's what I'm getting to," said Horace, pretending to be much offended. "But you wanted the plot, and I'm giving you the plot. Now, listen. This guy Tom Bristol and the girl get together, and they like each other, but it looks like this business in the West Indies is going to fold up for England and the girl's old man because Spain is getting mighty tired of it, and so the dons figure out it's about time to wipe out all the buccaneers. So in comes this villain business. Now listen. I got it. This villain is the lord high admiral of the Spanish navy in the Caribbean, see? And this Tom Bristol mixes it up with him.

"Well, the girl's old man doesn't like Bristol because Bristol isn't rich and he hasn't got a title, and so the old man thinks he'll polish off Bristol by telling him that if he knocks hell out of the dons—why, he can have the girl. And so Bristol is fitted out with a ship to knock off a couple of Spanish ships, and with a crew of buccaneers he goes slamming off to meet this admiral—"

"That's thin," said Jules. "You gotta have a good villain. You gotta have conflict."

"Well, haven't I got it?" howled Horace.

"You ain't got any villain," said Jules.

"Now, look," said Horace, "I'm telling you all about it. I'm getting to this villain. He's the lord high admiral of his Catholic majesty's navy in the Caribbean. And he gets it in for Bristol, too, and so they proceed to knock

hell out of each other all through the book; but, of course, in the end, Bristol kills the Spanish admiral and gets the girl."

"Spanish admiral, sure," said Jules. "But what kind of a guy is he?"

HORACE WAS STUCK for only an instant. There was Mike, sitting at the piano, playing dolorously. There was no gauging what Mike de Wolf's ancestry really was, but it was certain that the Irish side of his family had been enjoined by one of the dons who, defeated in the armada, were flung up on the coast of Erin to give the Irish race occasional black hair and dark eyes. Whence came the strain which made Mike what he was, he certainly could not be told from a don. Horace had his inspiration.

"Why, there's your villain," said Horace. "Now what more can you ask than that, see? Mike! Now look, Jules. Look how narrow and aristocratic his face is. Why, his nostrils are so thin that you could see light through them. And his complexion is as pale as alabaster. He's beautiful, see? He's tall and graceful, and he's got manners that'd put a king to shame. And he's got a well of sadness in him which, combined with his beauty, makes the girls fall for him in regiments. He looks delicate, but by Heaven, I've seen him lick guys twice his size and weight. There's your Spanish admiral. A romantic! A poetry-reading, glamorous, hell-fighting, rapier-twisting, bowing beauty of a gentleman, all perfume and lace and wild cat. There's your Spanish admiral. And he falls in love with this girl when he gets shipwrecked on the island where she lives and she doesn't know he's a don because he's so educated he can speak English without an accent—"

Mike had begun to glare. "You leave me out of this."

"See the fire flash in that dark eye?" said Horace to Jules. "Can't you see what he'd think of a swashbuckling captain from barbaric England? And when he gazes upon this girl who has saved his life he loses his heart to her. And not only does it become a battle between them for empire, but a conflict for a woman."

"Well—" said Jules doubtfully, "it *sounds* pretty good. But the color—"

"The color will be perfect!" said Horace. "I know the Caribbean like I know the keys of my mill. Can't you see it now?" And he really was taking fire about the idea. "This Mike, as the Spanish admiral, will wow 'em. He's the perfect character!"

"I said to leave me out of it," said Mike. "I've got to audition in the morning, and I don't feel any too good as it is."

"Nonsense," said Horace, and faced Jules. Horace girdled the bathrobe about him and began to pace up and down the floor amid the scatter rugs from Colombia. "So there's the novel. It begins with this Bristol getting the boot like I said, and then, when he's en route to the Indies, we cut the scene and we find ourselves on St. Kitts. No. We find ourselves on the deck of the *Natividad*, flagship of the Spanish fleet. This Mike is on deck, and the captain is telling him that the rest of the fleet's been scattered by the gale, and that the island off there is St. Kitts. Well, just as they're

looking at the island, Mike's telescope picks out a couple of pinnaces coming out from the land. They've got a lot of men in them, and as the sea is calm and as the wind after the storm has died, why, there's no getting away from them. So this Mike says to the captain—and boy, have we got a story here! —he says: 'Pirates! Clear for action!' And so they begin to clear for action. Mike—"

MIKE was trying not to listen. At the beginning of this he hadn't been feeling any too well, and now that Horace kept talking about him being on the deck of a ship and all that— Damn him, what was the idea of sticking his best friend into a story, anyway! There were a lot of things about Horace that Mike didn't quite like, such as drinking a cup of coffee halfway and then dropping cigarette butts into the cold remains, and wearing a bathrobe which hadn't been washed since Horace found it five years ago. And Horace, when he took off on a plot, was far too much to bear.

The story went on, but Mike closed his ears. He felt a little faint. An audition in the morning and, if he made it then he'd be playing piano for the Philharmonic. No wonder he felt that way. But he wouldn't drink. Maybe Horace had an aspirin in the bathroom.

Unnoticed by the other two, Mike got up and tottered toward the bathroom, tagged by Horace's ringing tones. It was quite unusual for Mike to have anything go wrong with him, for his reputation, for all of his apparent pale visage, was that he could be killed only with an ax. This worried him. And the condition was such that he soon found himself barely able to navigate.

Foggily he fumbled for the aspirin in the medicine chest, and, failing to find it, reached for the light. The metal string eluded him, and he sought to support himself by leaning against the washbowl.

He made contact. A blinding one! The light short-circuited with a fanfare of crackling!

Paralyzed and unable to let go, Mike sagged. He could still hear Horace as though Horace's plot was coming from Mars. He began to shiver and slump, and then, very quietly, he fell forward against the tub. A few seconds of consciousness remained to him, and he dimly sought to pull himself up. He reached out with his hand toward the edge of the tub, and then came a surge of terror which momentarily gave him animation.

Even as he reached out with that hand it was disappearing!

From fingertips to wrist to elbow!

Vanishing!

With a quiver, he shifted his fading gaze to his other hand, but it, too, was missing. And his legs were missing and his shoulders were missing—

There wasn't anything left of him at all!

The room was wheeling and dipping. He sought to howl for help.

But he didn't have any mouth with which to howl.

Michael de Wolf was *gone!*

SOME TIME after, Jules, much pleased about the plot now, got up to take his leave.

"That ought to make a fine story, Horace. When do you think you'll have it finished?"

"Oh, maybe six weeks," said Horace. "Maybe a little longer."

"Good," and then Jules looked around to say good night to Mike. But Mike was not to be seen. He never wore a hat, and so there was no way to tell whether he remained in the apartment or not.

"He beat it, I guess," said Horace. "He's probably sore about my using him as a character in this story."

"He's a good one, though," smiled Jules. "Well, good night, Horace. I'll call from time to time to see how you are getting along."

"And I'll be getting right along, too," said Horace. "In fact, I'm going to start in on the first chapter right away."

Jules left, and Horace pulled his mill to the forward part of the desk, brushing the alimony duns into the wastebasket, and soon there was no sound in the apartment beyond the rapid clatter of typewriter keys.

II.

THERE was roaring in his head and bitter water in his mouth, and all around him white froth and green depths intermingled furiously. Something crashed into his side, and he felt himself lifted up and cast down into silence, immediately afterward to be torn in all directions by a savage, snarling cyclone of spray and undertow. Again he was slammed brutally into fanged rocks and heaved up and over, to land upon soggy solidity.

The next wave mauled him and tried to get him back, but he still had enough wit about him to dig his fingers into the sand and essay a crawl to a higher level. After that the surf, booming about its losses, only reached his feet.

Mike de Wolf was ill. He had swallowed a gallon or two of the sea, and his stomach disliked the idea. There was blood on his hand and upon his cheek, and his head ached until he had no memory whatever of what had happened to him. Exhausted, he could not move another inch up the strand. Far off sounded a rattle of musketry, but it fell upon disinterested ears. The world could have ended at that moment and Mike de Wolf would not have cared.

How long he lay there he had no way of knowing, but when he came around, the back of his neck felt scorched and he himself was hot and gritty and bothered by the flies which hovered above and settled upon his wounded head. There was no further sound of firing. Instead, there was a faint whir, reminiscent of a typewriter, which seemed to come out of the sky.

He groggily sat up. Something within was telling him that if he stayed there he would invite even further disaster. But—where else could he go?

Immediately before him were a toothy series of rocks awash in a restless

sea. To his right, a craggy point reached up and out, a brownish silhouette against a crystal blue sky. Reaching away illimitably was the sea, quiet and sparkling and full of the whole spectrum.

Where was he, and why?

He turned his head and winced at the pain it brought him. Behind him lay a tangle of brown and green foliage, a wall reared up out of the gleaming yellow of the sand. This beach was not deep, and it ended at one end with the point and at the other with a tumble of gray-blue stones.

He tried to rise and abandoned the effort as impossible, at least for a while.

What place was this?

A few pieces of wood were being nagged by the grasping waves. They were round and broken, and lines trailed from them. And now that he had seen them he also saw more wreckage adrift upon the waves.

Suddenly he was beset by an incredible memory. He had been standing on the deck of a galleon when two pinnaces had surged up under oars to begin to hull the tall vessel 'twixt wind and water and to sweep the decks with musketry so diabolical in its accuracy that four helmsmen in a lump were beside the wheel. And then he remembered spars coming down in a deadly rain and a musketeer in the tops diving for the sea and striking the deck instead. And the scupper ports had opened their leather mouths, and from the sodden slain a series of red rivulets gathered into one and drooled into the sea. The galleon's list had increased, and then, alone upon the quarterdeck, Mike had seen half-naked men, burned black with sun and powder, come swarming aboard, smoke sweeping back from their linstocks—

He was crazy—that was it. He'd eaten too much lobster and had had a nightmare, and it had driven him crazy. How else could one account for it?

He recollected dimly that a man in a plumed hat had bowed to him with the words: "Your lordship commands that we open fire?" And that had been the start of the chaos.

MIKE HELD his head in his hands, for the world was beginning to wheel and dip once more. His feeble attempt to understand his condition and his weird displacement had been too much for his sun-scorched brow.

"Your lordship?" Now why in the devil had anybody said that to him?

The sun—that was what was making him feel this way. He had to get out of it, no matter what the struggle cost him.

He was reaching forward with his right hand to take another step when the sand fountained almost between his fingers. He snatched back. A report came to him, and then several more. He stared at the rocks at one end of the beach and saw smoke spouting thickly.

Somebody was shooting at him! And he wasn't even armed!

The pain in his head vanished and he scuttled with all speed for the green-and-brown cover. When he reached it, a bullet-plucked twig smote him stingingly upon the cheek.

There was a yell, and the thudding of approaching feet. "There he went!" "In there!" "Get through and cut him off, the swine!"

A pistol slug plowed earth beside his foot, and he crawled faster. Who the devil were these people, and why?

"Get behind him!" roared someone.

"Aye, aye, Dirk!" came from within the woods.

The sound of a horse came from the other direction on the beach. Men were threshing through the tangle and shouting to one another, coming nearer and nearer.

He felt like a rabbit, having no arms whatever. If only he had a gun or—

Clank!

He felt himself smitten about the waist, and lo! he had a buckler and sword! The rapier lay naked in the sling, without a scabbard, the way bravoes wore them of old. The hilt of the weapon was gold, and studded with round-cut precious stones. And in clear letters on the steel was stamped "Toledo," and "Almirante de Lobo."

Mike stood it as long as he could. The inanity of the business made him angry and the thought of lying there like a badger to be torn up by hounds gave him strength enough to rear up and grasp the hilt of the long blade and haul it free from the buckler. He took several stiff-legged strides and came out upon the sand.

Four dark-visaged swashbucklers, weapons alert, confronted him.

"There you are!" cried the black-bearded giant. "Hallo-o-o, Red, we've got the don!"

The point of the rapier licked the air. "You'll never take me alive," said Mike. "Use your pistols, you English dogs, or I'll spit you like a roasting chicken and feed you to the sharks!"

"By gad, he's got spunk!" said Dirk, the giant, merrily. "I'll take you on meself, me bucko, and send your ears back to 'is most Catholic majesty with the compliments of me bully boys. Lay on, me lace-petticoated papist, and 'ave a taste o' Manchester steel." Dirk's cutlass flashed before Mike's calm face, and the others, drawing, rushed forward.

Assailed from four sides and, presently, from eight, Mike sent the rapier singing into the throat of one and then into the heart of another before the weapon was struck from his hand. Bare-breasted to their steel, he stood erect to receive it. And the six, with a yell, dashed in.

"Stay!" came a clarion voice. "Back, you gutter sweepings!" And Mike was stunned to see a great bay horse come thundering into their midst to send them sprawling, but to miraculously miss him. And he was more than stunned to see its rider.

A flame-headed woman, imperious and as lovely as any statue from Greece, was upon the bay's sidesaddle. Her white linen gown was sewn with pearls about the throat and a wide hat dangled from its silken strap at her back.

"Back, I say!" she commanded. "You, Dirk! Have up the gentleman's

sword and give it to him by the blade—if he'll permit a fatherless varlet to touch it!"

Mike accepted the hilt of the weapon and slid it back into the buckler.

"Begone, you wretches!" cried the girl. "Or I'll ha' ye flogged from St. Kitts!"

"Your father—" hesitated Dirk.

"Handle yer bloody business, you fumbling oaf, and I'll handle my father! Get ye hence afore my groom puts spirit into ye wi' the cat!"

They fell back away from Mike, and a Nubian nearly seven feet tall coming up with chest heaving and skin agleam flourished a nine-tailed lash until it screamed avidly.

Dirk and his men retreated in good order, looking back as they went, sour about the loss of a don. Fifty paces away, Dirk drew himself up and cried: "He's a Spaniard, your ladyship, and ye'll ha' a sorry time keeping him against the town!"

"You'll have a sorry time swinging from a gibbet!" cried her ladyship. "Get hence!"

The sailors went straggling out of sight beyond the boulders at the far end of the beach.

Swish!

Swirl!

Mike was cloaked in black silk! And upon his head was a wide-brimmed hat with an enormous plume!

Mike felt weak and shaky, but he swept the miraculous hat from his bare head and bowed deeply to her. Midway in this operation the world's light went on and he pitched forward on his face into the sand, his fall cushioned by the corpse of a sailor he had slain.

III.

MIKE LUXURIATED in the huge bed. The four posts were tall sentinels guarding his rest, and, if they were not enough, the doors to the place were massive enough to stop a battering-ram. It was comparatively cool even here inside the netting. His head was bandaged, and his side was taped, and he smelled of rose water. He was only half awake, and so his surroundings did not particularly startle him, for Mike had slept in many a bed in many a clime.

After a while he'd get up and practice a while and then maybe call Kurt von Rachen and have a round of golf. Summer seemed to be here in earnest. Almost tropical, it was.

A set of hinges creaked and a round black head was thrust through the door. Then, more bravely, the servant, clad only in a white gown, came shuffling to the bedside to lift the netting and slide the tray onto the silken coverlet. He patted up the pillows behind Mike's head and helped him sit erect and then placed the tray on his lap. As quietly, the servant went away.

Mike was coming around now. He tried to remember what friend he had who owned a place like this and had black servants. But evidently—

The memory of the encounter on the beach brought him upright so hard that he almost spilled the tray. He looked at the netting and then at the coverlet and then at the massive stone room. Somewhere a surf was beating, and nearer palms were clattering languid fronds.

Where the hell—

He caught the tray just in time to keep from losing it. There was a fragrant melon, cool and luscious, a bottle of Madeira, a few sweet buns and a small pot of coffee. And propped against the coffee was an envelope.

Mike picked it up and read: "To the gallant captain."

"Huh," said Mike. He smelled it and found that it was old English lavender. "Hm-m-m!" said Mike.

He broke it open and found a copper-plate hand had written:

SIR;

I am grieved at the discourtesy which greeted ye upon our land and beg to tender my sympthy and the hope that your woundes paine you not this day. It is not the waye of the English to morder theyre captives particularly when they have beene gallant and strong in conflicte. Please accept our guarantye of our protection and hospitalitey as a smalle pyment for the injustices and horrores through which ye have been brought low. If I may so humbly request, should youre fever not be too great, I plead to attend you in your chamber come the afternoon.

LADY MARION.

Mike smelled the letter again and then laid it carefully beside his pillow. He poured himself a stiff jolt of wine and downed it while he poured.

He had been in many a strange situation in his life. As a matter of fact, his life had been full of strange situations, for he had long pursued a course of dabbling with anything which happened to attract his eye, and then, when he had failed in it, to go on to something else. Music had been the only stable commodity in his restless existence, and—

Gosh! That audition!

He'd worked hard for months to get it, and he'd practiced his fingers to stumps to prepare for it, and now— He made a sudden effort to get up, but it made his head throb and he sank back. Might as well have some more wine, he mused. And he did.

Where was he. and why was he? And had it been he who had lain two sailors low with a rapier?

Again he was jolted. In his realm, men who killed people usually wound up with a rope about the neck!

And, as if in answer to his misgivings, there came the sound of voices from the yard below, voices which swelled into a wave of anger. Mike listened tensely. He could not tell what the words were, but he could make out a single voice which seemed to be trying to placate the mob. Shortly, amid jeering and catcalls, the babble melted away, leaving only the surf and the palm fronds.

The black head was poked in the door again and the servant soft-footed up for the tray.

"What was all that racket?" said Mike.

"Them people from de town," said the Negro.

"What did they want?"

"Dey say mahstah more better give up Spaniard, suh. Dey say dey like hang Spaniard."

"Spaniard?"

"Yas, suh," drawled the Negro. "Dat's you, suh?"

Mike blinked. "B-but why do they want to hang me?"

"Ah guess it's on account of you is a Spaniard, suh."

"Spaniard! I'm no Spaniard!"

The servant's eyes went very wide. "You isn't, suh?"

"Hell, no! I'm . . . I'm an Irishman!"

With effort, the servant brought himself back to the instructions he had received. "Missy Lady say she want know answer, suh."

"Tell her I'll see her right away," said Mike.

Lady Marion! If that had been Lady Marion on that bay, haughty and commanding and beautiful to the point of pain, Mike felt that his luck was definitely in. What a woman!

Immediately, Mike being Mike, he cast about to find some way of making himself a little more presentable. He smoothed at his hair and was startled to discover the bandage and to find how his head was throbbing under it. And when he moved, his side throbbed, too. He'd been banged up, it seemed, but just how he could not exactly recall. He knew that the ache in his skull was probably the reason he could not think straight. He felt he ought to be much more alarmed than he was.

Well! If Lady Marion was going to pay a call, he certainly did not want to be found in bed, undressed. At a cost of many winces, he got up the netting and put his feet on the floor. What a strangely furnished room this was! Massive chests all studded with golden nails, tapestries covering the stone walls, a shield and a battle-ax decorating the space between the windows.

Mike gave his attention to the problem of clothes. There on the chair was a pile of garments, evidently smoothed out and intended for his accouterment. Mike hobbled to them and picked them up, examining them with definite dismay. Silk stockings, black and sheer, puff-sided knee breeches, also black, and a shirt to match. And lace! There was enough lace on the cuffs of that shirt to wrap a damsel from head to toe. It was beautifully worked with gold points along the edges, but it didn't seem to Mike that lace was quite the thing to wear when meeting a lady. The lace collar was pointed to stand up behind the head, and it also was heavy with gold. And the white doublet and the white half cape were braided and gold-buckled until they weighed pounds. What a weird outfit!

And yet, as he looked at it, it seemed familiar and even proper. Despite the fogginess of his head, he felt that there was something about this which harbingered a discovery of a new past stretching, forklike, behind him.

He dropped the clothes and went searching for more appropriate gear, but nowhere could he find anything even slightly resembling tennis slacks or polo shirts.

The black servant came drifting in with the noise of a shadow. He expressed no surprise at seeing Mike out of bed; rather, he expressed surprise that Mike would seek to dress by himself.

"I help," said the servant. "Missy say when you send me, she come." And he solemnly began to sort out the clothing on the chair, selecting the breeches as first.

Mike stared at them in dismay. They were silly-looking things. The cape he could understand, and even the doublet. But those breeches and that silken hose—

"Ole man sea raise ole Harry wit dese silks, suh. I try mah bes' to fixum, but dey don' fix so good."

"Was . . . was I wearing those yesterday?"

"Oh, yas, suh. 'Deed you was, suh. We wouldn't have no Spaniard fashions in dis yere house, suh."

The boy seemed determined to put them on him, and Mike was too groggy to resist. He was shaved and steamed and hauled at and tugged at until he closed his eyes with complete resignation. The pain in his side was terrible! And when this black boy girded up the hugely buckled belt about the doublet, Mike nearly yelped.

After a while the servant backed off from adjusting the gigantic gold buckles of the shoes and produced a brush to go to work on what of Mike's hair appeared below the head bandage. It seemed to Mike that there was quite a bit of that hair.

At last the black boy helped Mike to a full-length mirror. Mike had thought to find himself very strange, and he was astonished to discover how very usual he looked to himself. In fact, it seemed to him that if he hadn't looked so, it *would* have been strange.

The mirror gave back the tall, supple image of a Spanish gentleman, aristocratically handsome head backed by the upstanding lace collar, pale but strong hands barely showing under the folds of gorgeous lace, slim and shapely legs backed by the flowing cape which dropped from one shoulder. He was Mike de Wolf, but somehow he wasn't Mike de Wolf. There was a commanding poise about him which was an intensification of his usual manner, and in his face showed a pride of being and a consciousness of station which the old Mike de Wolf would not have had at all. He was grand and handsome and dashing, and, all in one, he was quite confused about it.

The black boy dropped the wide buckler over his shoulder and secured the sword in it. Mike almost failed to note that there was something unusual about that sword today. Its hilt was of unfaceted precious stones, set in

beautifully wrought gold, and its scabbard was ornamented by two golden serpents, one on either side— The scabbard! Yesterday it had no scabbard, and Mike knew enough about swords and rapiers to know that each was fit-

Mike was across the table before the big Englishman more than freed his blade.

ted to its own. And he was certain, now that he thought of it, that he had not been wearing this cape when he had come through the surf.

Strange, but he could swear that he heard a typewriter running somewhere.

"You may now summon your mistress," said Mike, and as he watched the boy to the door he wondered a little at his change of speech. How grandly formal had been those words, and how melodious his tones. Truly, wherever he was and why, there were some improvements which he could not discount.

He stood by the window, looking far out across an unfamiliar sea, one hand resting on the hilt of his sword, the other lightly touching the draperies at the height of his head. It was an easy, graceful pose.

THE DOOR opened and Mike did not immediately turn. He heard the rustle of silk and then the lady was bowing. He bowed low in return.

"I am indebted to your ladyship for my life," said Mike.

"And I, your lordship, am ashamed for the conduct of those sailors." She spread her loose skirts out as she sat in a carven chair and smiled upon him. "I trust your lordship is much recovered from the ill effects of the sea?"

"Thank you for your tender concern, milady. I am a little weak, but otherwise quite well." He made a slight motion toward the yard below. "I seem to be guilty of bringing threats upon your house."

"Lord Carstone cares nothing for that. He would not have you Spaniards think us murdering barbarians, and he is gone even now to have a pinnace brought up into the cave of yon point to take you to safety—providing, of course, that your people can furnish some slight ransom to remove the stain of guilt from his lordship."

Mike was bewildered at the next words which nearly left his lips. And those words were: "Milady, I am Miguel Saint Raoul Maria Gonzales Sebastian de Mendoza y Toledo Francisco Juan Tomaso Guerrero de Brazo y Leon de Lobo." But they went no further than his mind. Instead he heard himself say:

"Milady, please disabuse yourself of this belief that I am a Spaniard. True, I come before you clothed as an accursed don, and true, I was aboard the *Natividad* during the action, but I, milady, have the honor of being Michael O'Brien, an Irish gentleman of family, at your service and indebted to you for your hospitality."

She looked incredulously at him, at his Spanish cape and Toledo sword, at the pale aristocracy of his visage and the slender body within the silk.

"Not a Spaniard? God's breath, milord, you jest!"

"That I resemble a don, I avow. When the great armada of his most Catholic majesty was smashed by the brave English a few decades ago, my grandfather was cast up on the shore of Ireland, storm driven and perishing.

He was taken into the castle of Lord Dunalden, and there met my grandmother, his future wife, an Irish gentlewoman. I am the last of their family and, much against my own wishes, I sought my fortune in Spain. I was being sent here to the West Indies to take command of a mine when our fortunate accident took place off this island. I care nothing for my Spanish forebears after I have been with them. I repeat, milady, that I am an Irish gentleman, unfortunately part Spanish, thrown upon your mercies and your hospitality. If I must pay ransom, then let it be sufficient unto the dignity of a Dunalden."

Plainly, she was fascinated by him. Her tawny eyes examined him more minutely, and her lips were a little parted with wonder at him.

"Then . . . then you were not in command of that Spanish vessel?"

"I was not, milady," said Mike, and knew that he lied, but was powerless to correct that lie.

"You . . . you are a Dunalden?"

"Aye, milady. That I am also Spanish is only a whim of the Almighty."

"Prithee, milord," she said, standing, "have no fears of your treatment in this house. You are welcome as long as you like, for we must be given a chance to wipe away this ill-considered insult. Lord Carstone will be pleased at your presence tonight at supper. And now I must not further weary you. Good afternoon, milord."

Mike bowed deeply and felt his side was being torn out of him. He watched her as she went through the door, side or no side, for she had a graceful, regal way of walking which made him warm all through.

When she was gone he sank down on the bed and lay out at full length. God, what a woman! She was about five feet nine—some four inches shorter than Mike—and she had the poise of a queen. But she needed no crown. She had been born with it—her hair. How long and lovely she was! More of flame than of flesh. And those eyes— When they raked him they bathed him with ecstasy! Never had Mike—even Mike!—seen a woman like her.

And then, slowly, thoughts of her became confused in his own puzzle. Where was he? Why? And what time? Surely no woman had worn clothes like that since the early seventeenth century. Pearls in her hair where they made her coiffure flame the more, a great lace collar about her sweet throat to make her skin seem all the more white by contrast, a tight-bodiced gown which set off every curve of her delicious figure— She was something out of Van Dyck! All blue of gown, cream of lace, red of hair. And his thoughts drifted back slowly again to his problem.

EVIDENTLY, Mike decided, he had received a knock on the head which had brought on delusions. Yes, that must be it. And he felt sorry for himself. Besides, his head did ache dreadfully, and he loosened his collar and shed his cape in order to relax and try to sleep. Maybe when he woke, all this would be gone and he would be back in time for his audition with the

Philharmonic. He'd have to tell Horace about this. Might make a good yarn for him—

He sat upright so abruptly that he nearly tore his head off.

Horace!

Horace Hackett!

Why, he'd been talking about buccaneers and the West Indies and Spanish gentlemen and a hero named Tom Bristol— The light cord, the vanishing limbs— And Horace had said Mike was the perfect part for the villain of the piece— And Jules had grinned and agreed—

Horace Hackett! And his novel, "Blood and Loot," a tale of buccaneering on the Spanish Main when the English and French sought to stem the tide of the Spaniards and wrench from them some of the riches grasped in the early days of discovery.

"Blood and Loot," by Horace Hackett!

Then Mike grinned wearily. Well, that was that. He'd been listening to the plot, and he'd gotten a knock on the head, and now, of course, he was dreaming. Well, 'twas a pity to abandon such a lovely lady, but a dream was only a dream, and one had to get some more sleep to audition at the Philharmonic. Ho-hum. And Mike de Wolf, convinced as a dreamer is always convinced that he was not even awake, went off to sleep.

SOME HOURS later Mike awoke and the room was dark. A few stars twinkled in the rectangle of open window, and the surf was quiet. The palm fronds no longer rattled. Mike, yawning, reached for the table where he always kept his cigarettes, but there was no table. He reached farther. Still no table. Instead, his questing hand connected with a bell cord, and to steady himself he gave it a strain. Somewhere near a bell jingled, and the black servant slid in, carrying a taper.

Mike stared at the fellow in disbelief. He had sold himself the dream idea so completely—

"Supper ready in mos' an hour, suh." said the boy. Like a white-gowned ghost he went drifting through the room, lighting tapers. One by one the objects appeared which Mike had seen before. And then, looking down at himself, he saw that, while his shoes had been removed while he slept, he was still clothed as before.

"Boy!"

"Mah name Jimbo, suh."

"Boy, what's the date?"

"Don' guess Ah knows whut you is talkin' about, suh. We ain' got no mo' eatin' dates, iffen that's whut you means."

"The date," persisted Mike. "The month, the day, the year."

"Seems like I heerd somebody say this was somethin' like sixteen hunnert and forty, suh, but Ah wouldn' know."

"What?"

Mike was so startled by the statement that the boy, Jimbo, almost dropped the taper.

"That's three hundred years ago!" wailed Mike. "That's impossible!"

He slumped back on his pillow and stared groggily at a lizard which walked upon the ceiling, stalking a fly. Sixteen hundred and forty! Those clothes matched the date. So did his rapier, the ship yesterday, the sailors, the Lady Marion's speech, and her clothes—all, all added up to sixteen forty! And yet—somehow it wasn't.

He had heard of time travel, and he'd also heard of lunacy, and the way he felt right now, he was more willing to grant the latter. Was this a movie set, made of cheesecloth and propped with sticks? That thought brought him up and made him kick the wall, but, hobbling about and nursing his wounded toe, he decided that it was not a movie set and made the decision with profanity.

When Mike quieted he fell to wondering on the battle of yesterday. He remembered it very clearly now, recalled the soul-shaking thunder of cannon and the nasty sight of men being torn in half by chain shot and the all-too-real screams of suddenly shattered humanity. That battle had been no fake. And when he had run his rapier through those sailors on the beach that had been honest-to-God blood, and their death throes could not have been simulated.

Something else was coming over him now, a sort of strange belief in all this and a belief in his own part in it. Time travel? Well, if it was time travel, then how was it that he had managed the ship out there, knowing all its parts, giving the necessary orders, feeling a hatred toward the enemy which would never have existed in the heart of one who was wholly strange to the scene. No, he was not strange to this place or this time, for he had memory of it which, dim though it was, ran currently with his own life memory. And yet the memory did not seem anything from the past but from the immediate present.

Again he tried to lay aside the thought that this was "Blood and Loot," product of Horace Hackett's fertile if somewhat distorted imagination. These names, his own character, even this plot— Oh, no! My God, not that! Why, that would mean that he was Horace Hackett's villain in truth and in the flesh. And it would mean that he was in a never-never land where anything might and probably would happen. Where time would be distorted and places scrambled and distances jumbled and people single-track of character— Oh, Lord, not "Blood and Loot."

A horrible thought took him then and froze him to the bed. Horace Hackett's villains always suffered a frightful fate!

No, no, no, no, no, no, no!!!!!!!

Not "Blood and Loot"!

He was just going through a delusion brought on by that electric shock.

He was just living in his own dreams after hearing Horace Hackett outline a plot. This place could not exist at all, either in time or in space.

Still—and he attempted to fend off that gruesome conclusion—he was definitely awake and sufficiently in his right mind to realize this was all wrong.

And if this was the Spanish Main in the year 1640, and if these people were English gentlefolk, and if those sailors had been Brethren of the Coast, and if he *was* Miguel Saint Raoul de Lobo, almirante of the fleets of his most Catholic majesty, then, b'Heaven and gazooks, this was the last island in the world where he should be! His strangely entangled memories gave off some facts about what happened to captives in this undeclared war.

He'd escape, that's what he'd do. And instantly he was reminded within himself that there were Caribs on this island in the interior, and that Caribs thought white flesh a luscious banquet. And besides, he couldn't escape, for what did he know about these guns and sword fighting and sailing a ship? If he tried to fight free, that would be the end of him. In the interior he would be eaten. At sea he would drown. If he stayed here he'd be discovered and strung on a gibbet—

No, no, no! This wasn't Horace Hackett's "Blood and Loot"! It couldn't be! It was just a nightmare. It *had* to be!

Jimbo fixed him up again and then helped him down the stairs. Mike was pleased to find that his side hurt much less and that his head did not ache at all. And again there was that sound of a typewriter.

He walked through a long hall and into a room where tall candles gleamed above gold dishes and crystal, and found Lady Marion there before him. He bowed elegantly to her—amazed at this graceful accomplishment of his—and she curtsied deeply back. His eyes were so taken up with her—for her gown was now amber, like her eyes, and cut very low at the front and back—that he failed to see Lord Carstone until a "Harumph! Har-r-r-umph!" appraised him of that presence. He bowed again to Carstone.

The fellow was almost as broad as tall, an overly upholstered giant sculped out of lard. Great gold chains gleamed against a flowered vest and green-and-red-patterned coat; his calves bulged out of strained white stockings, and there were artificial roses on his shoes. His wigged head was a lump of putty sunk into a huge roll of cotton. All seven chins wabbled as he spoke.

"Milord," said Mike, "I am pleased at last having the pleasure of meeting my gracious host."

"Harumph, harumph," said Lord Carstone. "M' daughter tells me yer Irish, sir."

"I have that honor, milord."

Carstone inspected him. "Damme if ye don't look like a don. Well, well! Harumph, har-r-r-rumph, my error. M' pardon, sir, and I bid ye welcome to my house. Gog's wounds, Marion, my wench, if he doesn't look like a double-damned don, at that! Well, no mind, no mind. Sit yerself down and have at it, m' boy."

Mike seated Marion at the foot of the board and took his own station in the middle, but dinner was not yet to begin, for, with a clank and a creak, there entered a scarlet-coated, gold-braided, white-wigged, powdered fellow of about middle age, whose bearing and address were those of a soldier.

"Hah, capt'n!" said Carstone. "In time, I see, for dinner as usual, eh? This is Michael O'Brien, an Irish gentleman that we mistook for a don. Sir, Capt'n Braumley."

"Pleased and honored," said Mike, getting up and bowing. The captain bowed doubtfully and took his seat, with a clatter of weapons, across from the guest. Captain Braumley's battle-battered face was a little antagonistic.

"So it's Irish, is it? Blast m' blood and bones, what's this?" He looked hard at Mike. "Can't say as I've any belly for sitting to dine with a Spaniard papist!"

"Ye'll keep yer evil tongue in yer cheek, sir," said Marion with lifted chin, "or I'll have ye taught better manners by the gentleman himself. He's no common gutter-bred soldier!"

The captain choked on that one and became purple-hued. Mike had never seen anyone really turn purple from embarrassment before, and it was really amazing to see it. Bright purple.

"He's a gentleman, and he's at m' board," said Carstone heavily, "and if ye can't be civil, he's welcome to run you through a time or two."

The fact that they both insisted on the fact that Mike was a gentleman seemed to mollify the captain at least to the point of civility. That the captain was not a gentleman he soon proved by his address to his dinner, which was as overbearing as his presence on a parade ground, and quite as loud.

"Forgive 'm," said Carstone to Mike. "You do look damned like a don. Fact, they're talkin' o' catchin' and hangin' ye in the public square and burnin' ye in the bargain, so don't be too hard on the captain."

Being a gentleman was evidently important, thought Mike. But it didn't make one immune from villagers.

"Hanging and burning?" he said, spoon poised over his soup.

"Aye. Ye killed two sailors, I hear, and a damned capable piece of work, too, what's more. Throat and heart. Have you teach the capt'n here a trick or two with the sword, eh?"

The captain glowered, but went on with his frontal attack, evidently supposing his beef still on the hoof.

DINNER sped by, plate by plate, and Mike was becoming groggy with the profusion of various kinds of meat when, at last, the parade stopped and the rear guard of wine began to come up.

"So yer Irish," said the captain.

"Aye," said Mike. "An' I take my mother's maiden name of O'Brien."

The captain thought he saw a joke in that and looked sly. "Was anythin' wrong with yer father's, or didn' ye ever know it?"

Carstone spilled his wine. Lady Marion went white and stood up so fast that the black servant behind her barely had time to get her chair out of the way.

"Sir," Mike heard himself say, "my grandfather was Martine Sebastian Jose Ignacio Tomaso Guerrero de Brazo y Leon, Knight of the Golden Fleece, Captain of the Cross, Lord of Toledo and Seville. My father, sirrah, was Lord Follingby, Terrence O'Brien."

"Then you *are* a don, b'Heaven!" cried the captain. "Guts and gadflies, Carstone, ye'll have a don at your board and keep him from the town! I'll have my garrison here within an hour!"

"You'll be dead within an hour," said Mike coolly. And his blade leaped from its scabbard and flashed as it danced across the board. He leaped between the tall candles and jumped down in such a way as to bar the exit of the captain.

"I'll not kill you with this, for it takes no stain of filthy blood," said Mike. "But pistols, Lord Carstone, are in order for two."

"B-but you're really a don!" said Carstone.

"I choose to call myself Irish, and my allegiance is English," said Mike. "If the clod here can stomach the pistol's mouth, have them out and we'll to it!"

"You call me coward!" roared the captain, his own blade shrieking from its sheath.

Mike was forced to give way before the lightning thrusts which sought his throat. For an instant he was paralyzed by the certain knowledge that he knew nothing whatever about swordsmanship! The singing steel blades clashed with desperate thrust and more desperate parry, and Mike went up the stairs of the hall two steps. He knew he needed all his eyes for that magically shifting point which sought his heart or throat, and yet he amazed himself by saying coolly:

"Your permission, milady. The beggar seems a bit insistent."

What the devil made him talk like this? And was that sound he heard a typewriter? It *must* be!

Marion stood in the doorway of the dining room, light from the lantern there throwing molten beams into her hair. Her lips were parted in fascination, and her eyes were overbright.

Mike went through the other's guard in a false return, leaped back, parried with a quick cutover, attacked with a flying return so swift and adroit that Captain Braumley was disarmed so suddenly that he stood staring at his empty hand while his rapier went clanging over the stones to bring up loudly against the wall.

Mike then used his blade as a whip and began to cut the low-born captain about the back and buttocks until Braumley howled in pain and protest at the abuse, stumbling backward and striving to fend off that merciless blade with his extended hands.

"I apologize!" wailed Braumley.

"Out, offal," said Mike, catapulting the fellow through the door and down the long curving steps. And when Braumley had fallen the flight, Mike seized the fellow's sword and flung it after him.

Leaning upon his sword at the top of the steps, Mike said: "Thank your pagan god, blackguard, that you're oaf and no gentleman, else my clean blade would have drunk your blood to death!"

Braumley, moaning, picked himself out of the refuse in the yard and, retrieving his sword, slunk swiftly off into the gateway and down the hill to the town.

Mike turned with a gallant bow to the Lady Marion. "Forgive me, milady."

Her voice was throaty with emotion. "He . . . he insulted you in our house. The . . . the right was yours—"

"Then I am forgiven?" said Mike.

"Aye," she said, faint-voiced. And then she fled down the hall and closed the door of the drawing room behind her.

Mike went back to Carstone, who poured him a glass.

"Sorry, sir," said Mike.

"Oh, bosh and fiddlesticks, m' lad; these things happen. Frightful bore, anyway. Drank m' wine and made love t' me daughter. Swine, swine clear through, m' lad. Have another glass. Cawn't say I've enjoyed anything so much since my brindle bull whipped Snarling Laddy in '21. Besides, I owed him money."

"I trust I didn't frighten Lady Marion too much."

"Frighten! *Hah!* Why, m' lad, there's a wench! There, m' lad, is a wench. Damme if she didn't run away, at that. Show, all show. You'll know these women after a time. Daresay when yer as old as I am and you've known as many, you'll understand. But there's a wench, that Marion. She thinks she's sick at the sight of blood and violence, but what are women but violence and blood, what? I say, m' lad, I'd never question the word of a gentleman, but are you sure you weren't in command of that ship out there the other day?"

"I?" said Mike, smiling.

"Well, we've had a bad time about dons. Papists and all that. Lord Buck'n'h'm—Steenie, you know—made all sorts of blather over papists. He's dead, but the English are still stirred up about the dons. Now, bein' a political power, I know somethin' about it and religion—well, what's religion? I make no bones about it, damme eyes. I want what the Spaniards have, and so I'm made to preach against 'm. Y' know, most of m' trade is done with the buccaneers, and so we keep 'em worked up about the dons. Well, have another glass. A man can't help his grandfather. Lord of Toledo and Seville, you say? Well, well. I d'say there's only one don I'd like to see swing, and that's the fellow they call Miguel Saint Raoul de Lobo, lord high admiral of his most Catholic majesty's navies in the New World."

Mike felt a jolt and a realization of identity with that same lord high admiral. In fact, it was coming to him that he *had* commanded the *Natividad* in the recent action, and *was* Miguel Saint Raoul de Lobo. He felt faint, but he heard himself say, offhand:

"Yes? Can't say as I know the gentleman. What have you against him in particular?"

"Well, m' lad, I'm a businessman and a good one. England may have no right at all to these colonies, but as long as I can keep the buccaneers hard at it—the English and the French both—why, the Spanish cargoes find their way to England through my clearing house. We might as well be frank about it. It's damned good business. Spain is rich. Why should she begrudge a few millions in bullion? Eh? And these seas are swarmin' right now with English and French adventurers. So business is very good. But m' intelligences from Spain tell me the dons are sick of it. They've sent an admiral, and a good one, out here. Not one of your pap-suckling pansies, but a fellow that distinguished himself in the recent unpleasantness against th' English. But I'll ha' nothing to worry about soon."

"So?" said Mike.

"Aye. Y' see, there's a young chap name of Bristol, good family but wild, cached from the navy, he was, that come out here to seek 'is fortune. Impressed Marion no end, and she gathered up his eyes and she's still got 'm. Likely lad, but wild. All steel and cannon shot, that's Bristol. Good-lookin', too. 'E come down here to take his ease with the brethren of the coast, and soon as they found out he was an ex-naval captain they gathered 'round. So, not wantin' to stop in the way of the lad, I outfitted a bit of a fleet to see how many cargoes he can bring back. I've faith in 'm, though I'd never let 'm know it. If he comes back with a good haul, why, the lads'll be tearing to go to sea at his heels again, and we've a force against Spain. If he's the boy he started out to be, why, there's even a chance that we can take a colony or two from the dons. I've given 'm letters o' mark as governor of this island, and I've offered him the hand of Marion herself if he can come back here with the head of this fancy lord highadmiral dangling under his bowsprit."

"Quite a prize," said Mike jealously.

"Aye, quite a prize. If I hadn't done it, Bristol might not have tackled any Spanish first-line vessels. He'll be back here in a week or two, God willing, and he's hoping to bring home the pride of the navy of Spain as aforesaid."

"Head under the bowsprit, eh?" said Mike.

"Even that. If not now, then some day. The Spanish, y' know, sent this Miguel Saint Raoul de Lobo here to wipe up the English and the coast brethren, and what a joke on his lordship to come home under a bowsprit!"

"How . . . how," said Mike faintly, "will he know if he has the right man?"

"Why, 'tis simple. He's got some Maroons from the Panama coast that were slaves on the flagship when his lordship came over from Spain. They know him. Y' see, if we get him, we get the one man who has orders to wipe out the English, and we'll discourage another from taking the field against our thriving little colonies. Neat, eh?"

"You mean . . . mean that these Maroons will betray his lordship?"

"Betray! Why, 'tis plain to see you don't know this coast, m' lad. The Spaniards murdered Maroons until their arms were tired, and Maroons are fast friends of the buccaneers. They even wanted Bristol to go to the home where his lordship first put up and take 'm in 'is sleep. And maybe they'll do it. You can't beat a proud man like a Maroon and murder his wife and friends without him doing something about it, Indian or no Indian!"

"I daresay," said Mike, and memories were stirring uneasily where no past had been. "And this Bristol will soon be home, eh?"

"Right."

"By the way, milord, I'd like quite well to stay, but I can't have the town revolting against you because of my father and because of this Captain Braumley."

"But ye're English sympathies and the word of a gentleman protect you," said Lord Carstone, all chins wagging. "And as for Braumley and all, he's no loss. I've but to say what happened. Damme, who's governor here? And you knowing Spanish—why, you can be of great help to me. In an intelligence way, you know."

Mike received the impact of the reason why Lord Carstone was being so nice to him. Mike could be so neatly used in this business that Carstone's eagerness quite blinded him to Mike's possible duplicity. A spy to the Spanish, indeed. In the pay of the English! Unaccountably, Mike broiled within at the thought. But the fact was saving his life. For he, Miguel Saint Raoul de Lobo, lord high admiral of his most Catholic majesty's navy in the New World, would not last long the instant one Tom Bristol arrived home. His command of English, a thing so rare as to nearly excuse his "Spanish father," would not serve him once those Maroons laid eyes on him. He had a vision of raw-backed men dying in the sun while the lash still swooped down upon them, and gutted women lying in the charred wreckage of forest huts, and babies with their skulls smashed against rocks—Maroons! How they hated the Spanish. And with what cause!

He tried valiantly to figure an avoidance of the necessity to stay here until Bristol arrived. But a panting black brought news which saved his energy.

"Mah lord," said the black, bowing to the floor, "guard say come run and tell quick. Cap'n Bristol just now pass he fleet in by light."

And the thunder of saluting guns tore apart the night to confirm the news.

IV.

In the cool, dark depths of the Vagabond Club on Fifty-fourth Street, Horace Hackett limply regarded a half-empty glass, a perfect picture of an author who has finished a day's stint and who hopes his virtuousness will be noticed. His sport coat was unbuttoned to relax his rotundity, and his pink-and-purple tie was askew; he needed a shave and seemed to be in a bad state of disrepair, hair in eyes and cuffs none too clean.

He was wholly unconscious—so far as anyone could tell—of the whisper across the room, to wit: "That's Horace Hackett, the popular novelist." And it was purely coincidental that Horace immediately sighed deeply and assumed a profound expression.

Winchester Remington Colt, the Western writer, came lounging in to the bar, his Stetson on the back of his head, his high-heeled boots loud upon the mosaic. "Gimme a shot of redeye, pard," he said to the English bartender. And because the English bartender was used to the various artists and writers and publishers who belonged to the Vagabond Club, he knew already that this meant a drink of King's Colony Scotch in soda, weak.

Winchester Remington Colt wrapped a pale hand around the glass and came striding along, having spotted Horace.

"Hello, Hackett, ole pard," said Colt. "Mind if I hunker down a spell? Reckon as how you been horsewhippin' the wordage from the way yore all tuckered out." He was wholly oblivious of the whisper from the end of the room:

"That's Winchester Remington Colt, the Western writer."

"Worn to the bone," sighed Horace, extending a hand so that Colt could see how his fingers were shaking. They weren't, and so Horace made them shake a little. Colt wondered if Horace had ever bothered to clean his fingernails in his life.

"Book, I suppose," said Colt. "Doing a book myself. It's about—"

"Yes," said Horace hurriedly, "a book. Deadline right up on me, practically feeding it to the presses. It's called 'Blood and Loot,' a story of—"

"Is that so?" said Colt, his Western jargon getting lost now that he was talking in lowered tones to Horace. "My story is right up against the press, too. It's a fine yarn, though. Splendid setting. Early Southwest. Unusual, too. This sheriff has a son who isn't any good, and so when everybody accuses the boy of holding up the Wells Fargo office at—"

"Sounds fine," said Horace. "Yes, sounds fine. This 'Blood and Loot' is a story of the early buccaneers. You know, lace and tall ships and rapiers and two men fighting to the death over a lovely woman—"

"Is that so?" said Winchester Remington Colt swiftly. "'Hell on the Border' has a swell heroine. She's a dance-hall girl that's trying to go straight, see? And so when she falls in love with the sheriff's son—"

"Well, well, well!" said Horace. "That does sound fine."

They gave up and sat moodily sipping their drinks. At last the plot-

recital contest which so often baffles authors died out within them and they began to chat generally.

"This is a hell of a business," said Horace. "If I had it all to do over again, I would dig ditches for a living."

"So would I," said Colt. "Work, work, work, and where's it get you. Some day you turn in a sour one and then they say, 'Colt's slipping. He's a has-been.' And they forget about all the money you've made for them and they shake their heads. And then they're convinced that you're through, and so everything you send in gets put into the slush pile and read by the fourth assistant editor, and after a while they don't even send letters, just printed rejection slips. It's a hell of a life."

"Yeah," said Horace. "Just as if everybody didn't lay an egg at one time or another. It'd be different if editors were different."

"They're all a pack of bums," said Colt. "And what makes it so awful is that they never really know what the public wants. Why, sometimes you get a story through that they think stinks, and the public eats it up. And sometimes the story really does stink, and the public eats it up just the same."

"Yeah," said Horace. "Remember 'Gone with the Wind'?"

"Huh?"

"'Gone with the Wind.' All the waitresses and bus drivers thought it was swell, and what'd it have on the ball? Nothing, that's what. Any professional writer could really have done a good job on it."

"Oh, sure. I remember now. It was about a young guy whose father was out to kill him."

"Yeah," said Horace.

"Or was that 'Anthony Adverse'?"

"Yeah," said Horace. "But the point is, editors make me sick. They burn you out and squeeze you dry, and then they say you're a has-been. I ought to buy a farm."

"Farm?" said Winchester Remington Colt, stretching out his high-heeled boots. "I was on a farm once. For a week end. Hell of a place. Woke me up at ten o'clock in the morning, they did, after me not being able to sleep all night because it was so quiet."

They felt perfectly in accord now.

After a little, Horace said: "You know, I've been running across a funny thing lately."

"Yeah?" said Colt.

"I find out that it's a lot of bunk plotting the middle of stories out straight."

"How so?"

"Well, you get them going and they pretty near write themselves. That is, if the characters are good."

"Yeah. I've noticed that once in a while. You start a story and then it takes itself out of your hands and begins to go off as it pleases. Yeah, I've noticed that."

"Sure. You lay out the beginning and know how it's going to end, and it wanders around as it pleases in the middle. Course, you know the high spots, but even those take care of themselves pretty well if you have the effect you want in mind. This one I'm doing now started out to be a straight proposition, with the hero coming in as usual and getting mopped up by the villain and then mopping up the villain. But after I got it going I found out that the villain was a pretty interesting character, too, and so the thing is going to be pretty hot. Sympathetic from both sides, see? I figure maybe a villain, as a straight villain, is pretty hard to swallow. You know, a guy isn't all bad. So the villain's got his reasons, too. Now in this story the villain is going to fall in love with the heroine and it's going to make him as decent as can be. Course, he pulls a couple of dirty tricks and gives the hero some thinking, and there's a lot of fighting around, but the thing is handling itself, if you get what I mean."

"Sure, that happened to me in 'Hell on the Rio Grande.' It just rattled itself off as though I didn't have a thing to do with it. Sure, I knew the beginning and the end, but the middle just went racing along."

"It's funny," said Horace. "I get spooky about it sometimes. It's—well, it's as if we were perfectly in tune with the story. We don't have to think about it, it just sort of comes bubbling out of us like music."

"Yeah. I remember Mike saying one time that a story wasn't any good unless it came out that way. But, then, he's nutty on the subject of music and so it doesn't count. By the way, haven't seen him. He was supposed to come over to my apartment for a cocktail party last night, and he didn't show up. You seen him?"

"No. I think he got mad at me for saying I was going to use him for a story. He shoved off, and I haven't seen him since. But what I was getting at is the way you feel about stories sometimes. It's—well, sort of divine, somehow. Here we are able to make and break characters and tangle up their lives and all, and sometimes the characters get so big for us that they sort of write themselves, if you know what I mean."

"And you get a real kick out of writing it," said Colt. "You know how it's going to end, but you surprise yourself in the middle. Sure."

"Sure. Now I know how I started it and I know the conflicts and I know that in the end the hero knocks the villain off and gets the girl, but just how it's all going to happen I'm not sure. It just sort of happens."

"Yeah. Makes a guy feel funny. Like he's a medium, or something."

"No, I feel different than that. When I go knocking out the wordage and really get interested in my characters it almost makes me feel like—a god or something."

"Yeah, I know," said Colt.

"It's a great business," said Horace.

"Yeah. Sure. Nothing like being a writer."

V.

MIKE DE WOLF wandered in perplexity through the governor's great stone house. A year or two before this displacement into an apparent nowhere he had cruised the West Indies briefly in an attempt to shake off a siege of melancholy boredom—he had painted a few pictures of red-roofed houses and native women with baskets on their heads, and had then tossed the canvases overboard on the decision that he would never be able to paint—and he had seen St. Kitts from the windows of an automobile hired by tourist companions—who had bored him desperately.

Now, going to the great windows of a drawing room, looking down the hill from over the battlements to the town, he was recalled to an earlier visit here. This was Brimstone Hill, then. But how strange to find this mighty fortress all built and wholly solid if the year was 1640! This great fortress, he remembered out of the tourist's guide, was built after the American Revolution! And yet he had twice checked the date, and it was agreed that the year was 1640. In addition, as well as he could remember, there was something wrong with the geography. The harbor was nearly circular, and admission to it was gained through a very proper channel all set with flashing lights. He wasn't sure, but he supposed flashing lights to be a fairly modern invention.

Where was he, and why?

Brimstone Hill in St. Kitts solved it not at all, for this was not really Brimstone Hill, and it was not really St. Kitts. And the dates were shuffled like the numbers on a deck of cards.

Late eighteenth-century masonry in the mid-seventeenth century. A twentieth-century diletante of the arts masquerading as a Spaniard admiral in 1640.

And if this *was* St. Kitts, then where were the French, with whom the government had been shared by the British? And where was Sir Thomas Warner, who history said had been governor and practical owner of the place at this stated period?

Certainly this sort of thing would soon drive him mad. Nothing could be trusted. The first thing he knew, somebody would pull out a cigarette lighter and reach for a telephone, the while speaking archaic English on the subject of the doings of Charles I.

He moved out upon the balcony the better to see activity in the harbor. He felt assured that if he tried to escape from this place he would be stopped and suspected, and yet—Gog's blood, as Lord Carstone would say, he didn't dare stay here and face Captain Bristol and the Maroons! There were the vessels, all lights and activity, anchor chains rattling out as they took their anchorages. Seven there were, most of them small, about two hundred tons. Their type was difficult to establish for lack of daylight.

Where was he, and why?

He hadn't moved back into history, for history had never been thus,

and so any time change was out. He hadn't ascended to another plane, for too much of this was definitely human earth.

His first guess about Horace Hackett had sent a chill prickling at the hairs of his neck. The last thing he had heard had been exactly this plot. "Blood and Loot" had contained these names— He revolted against the idea. Not Horace Hackett's story!

He had an image of Horace, girded about with a dirty bathrobe, surrounded by cigarette butts, unshaven and sweaty, hammering thunderously upon his typewriter, ripping off copy by the yard.

MIKE cast his mind back over the events of the past two days. Two men he had killed on the beach and wounded another tonight. And he had bested them with a rapier—a weapon about which he knew nothing, but which, in his hands, became abrupt demise. And there was something else: his head felt quite all right, and the bandage about it had mysteriously vanished; further, his side felt as good as new, and there was no pull of tape there. What mad world was this in which a man became possessed of sudden talents and healed in minutes? And then his sword scabbard and cape and hat had appeared magically overnight.

His own conduct and his speech had not been Mike de Wolf. Could it be that he was actually taking on the character of one Miguel Saint Raoul de Lobo, lord high admiral of the Spanish fleet in the Caribbean? Certainly his memory was becoming padded with odd memories which had no identity with his own, Mike's, past.

He was recalling just now that a woman named Anne awaited at Nombre de Dios to call him "dear," and that a Carib slave girl, a princess among her savagely beautiful people, sat watching the sea from the window of a balconied casa. He was remembering the thin, rapacious evil called Father Mercy and the giant Trombo, so ready with a cat or a headsman ax and so devoted to his admiral.

He was remembering a yesterday of play amid orange blossoms at Valencia and a proud Spanish mother and father looking fondly upon him as a cadet of the king; a kiss stolen in Morocco; the thunder of his vessels' guns at Gonai; the shrieks of men dying in a mist of smoke; the whimper of wounded in the dark; the soft hands of a pope making him a Knight of the Cross; soft, sweet arms in the hot humidity of Panama; the dance of a buccaneer swinging from a gibbet; dispatches from the king—

His hands whipped to his doublet and parchment crackled there. He took out the packets with their broken seals, sea-stained and wrinkled, but proud with the arms of Castile and Leon. By the light of a guttering guard lantern he glanced at them. How familiar was that language! Spanish, but as clear as any English!

ALMIRANTE;

The English and French bore like evil worms into the glorious Empire of Spain beyond the seas, sacking cities and flaunting our troops and governors. You are given,

as inclosed, commissions as Lord High Admiral of His Most Catholic Majesty's Navies in the New World, empowered to use all vessels and forces of defense and offense to put down forever the English and French dogs. You are to take no cognizance of any letters or commissions but are to hang buccaneers as pirates wherever found. You are to wipe out the coastal villages of any Caribbean Indians found to be aiding the English and French. This is not official war and your discretion is solicited while your utmost endeavor is requested. May you again arise victorious above our enemies upon the sea and keep glorious the golden banner of your native land. PHILIPPE KING

Mike had the idea that he had read these before, but their import now was staggering. Dispatches such as these upon his person! And Braumley barking at the landing that a Spaniard was in the house of the governor. And from what he had heard of this Captain Bristol, he doubted not that the man would be thorough and demand that his Maroons be allowed to see the Spaniard. And these dispatches—they would mean his death! But he dared not destroy them and thus destroy his own authority. He swiftly replaced the papers in his doublet, glancing about to see that no one had seen.

He was barely in time, for a soft footfall sounded near him on the parapet. It was Lady Marion.

She had not seen him yet, for she was studying the harbor below, and Mike felt a sudden jealous pang.

"Milady," he said.

She started and then smiled uncertainly at him.

"The unfortunate lesson merited by Captain Braumley and administered by myself seems to have upset you. Forgive such actions on my part—"

Good lord! What was wrong with him that he had to talk such a stilted way? And— *Yes!* There was the sound of that typewriter again!

"They are already forgiven, sir."

"Again I thank you," and he bowed.

THEY STOOD there for a little time, looking down the steep hill at the fleet in the harbor, yellow jewels set sparkling into black satin. Mike looked at Lady Marion as much as he could without staring. She had drawn a thin white wrap about her shoulders against the cool wind, and the high collar of it put an outer halo about the halo of her hair. Mike thought about paintings of the masters and could find no face to compare with hers, no coloring to match the vibrant life of her own.

"Soon you will meet Captain Bristol," said Lady Marion at last. "I hope you will like him."

"My affections," said Mike, "are yours to command."

"He might . . . hold your Spanish grandfather against you. I hope you will understand that he was once confined in a Spanish prison when storm drove him on the reefs of Spain, and was tried by the Inquisition and condemned to the auto-da-fé as an English heretic. With great skill and courage he managed his escape, but had to leave many of his crew to die or wear out their lives on the galleys. He is bitter."

For an instant their blades locked hilt to hilt—then the Englishman's went flying across the room.

"Is that why he seeks the Spaniard in these waters?"

"Aye, and other things. We have a right to this sea, and Captain Bristol believes it can be enforced."

"He is most optimistic, judging from what I have seen of the fleets of Spain."

"His men are wild devils," said Lady Marion. "The deadliest marksmen in the world are the buccaneers who made their living shooting cattle and other wild game in Hispaniola. They are the restless spirits who chafed under navy discipline and managed to desert, who flouted authority and order and came out to the New World in prison ships or merchantmen. Only Captain Bristol has been able to unite them into a fleet, and there is much hope that the power of Spain may be broken in these colonies."

"So Bristol dreams of the wealth of Peru," said Mike.

"Aye. And the power of the 'bloody flag,'" replied Lady Marion. "Some day the cross of St. George and not the cross of Spain will float above the Caribbean."

"You seem to share the ambitions of your men," said Mike.

"Of Lord Carstone, sir."

"From the way he talked about you this evening, he seems quite well pleased with the daughter he has raised. And with reason."

She looked musingly down across the harbor, and then, withdrawing from the battlement, wandered into the castle hall, Mike keeping beside her.

"There was a time, sir, when my father was not pleased," she said. "For a girl in the family of a great merchant is no asset—and he never had a son."

"But that is all forgotten. It must be, considering the light in which he holds you. Never have I seen a man so proud of a daughter—or a son, either, for that matter."

"Aye?"

They were in the drawing room now, and it seemed quite natural to Mike that, in the yellow glow of candles, the polished keys of a piano gleamed. She left him to pour wine at the sideboard, and he, magnetized to the instrument, seated himself on the bench. He blinked wonderingly at the gold letters: "Steinway, Chicago."

"They say," said Lady Marion, "that when I was born and he was told that I was a girl he went away and did not return for months, so great was his grief at the misfortune." There was sadness lurking in her voice, and she seemed to be speaking half to herself. She gave Mike a glass and clinked hers against his.

"To the Empire of England in the New World," she proposed.

"Nay," said Mike swiftly. "I drink only to your beauty."

Lady Marion smiled and lowered her glass, while Mike drank his to the bottom against the necessity to answer her toast. Putting it aside, his fingers strayed to the ivory keys.

"Your father did not strike me as being such a foolish man," said Mike.

"He was not being foolish," said Lady Marion, spreading out her skirts as she sank down into a chair. "Who could carry on his business? Who could direct his ships upon the seas when he was gone? Nay, I understand.

But for many years I did not. I could not know why he was so careless of me. But when my mother died he changed."

Mike's fingers caressed a musing chord from the instrument, and it lingered in the room.

"He gave me presents after that. Funny presents like saddle horses and toy guns and a sailing boat. And because I was not yet nine I did not disagree, but played with them and enjoyed them. And when I would ride to hounds later on and take the brush before the first among the men, or when I would helm a boat to victory on the Thames in a race, or when I would down bags of birds with a fowling piece, he would be pleased. And because he was the only one I truly cared to please—for he's a darling old brigand—I developed what are strange skills in a woman."

"I would rather you called it fascinating," said Mike, playing softly a few bars from Brahms as a background to her lovely golden voice.

"Aye, my gallant sir. You would turn it to account. But women are not happy when they are able to beat men at their own games. When they can slap the face of a cad and have at him at dawn upon the field of honor, and yea! walk away from his quivering corpse."

"You've done that?" said Mike, the piano suddenly still.

"And worse. I'm useless to myself and to the world, sir. What is a woman but a wife? And how happy is a wife who has a man weaker than she?"

Mike's fingers drew out melody from the keys. "I can understand. In a time when women are supposed to be all froth and faint, the masculine accomplishments must set ill upon one so lovely."

"It is funny, in a way," said Lady Marion. "I hope you forgive my statements and ha' no thought of my being an empty braggart, for these things to me are curses rather than accomplishments. Strange tastes for a lady. And how poor a sham am I. Tonight"—and her voice dropped a note and softened—"I almost was burst by my enthusiasm over your thrashing that vulgar hound, Braumley. I almost cheered my bravoes to you and shook your sword hand. But I tried to remember. I tried to be a lady. I turned and went away from men who would brawl before me. Of course, it was not your fault," she added hastily. "But, as I say, sir, I am a counterfeit. No men dance with me. They salute me. No men send me flowers for fear they'll be returned in a nest of white feathers—aye, and vixen that I am, I've done for, for I despise a coward. I am a lovely woman, you say, sir, but I am a sham as a lady. Ah," and she sighed, "would that I *had* been born the boy my father wanted."

MIKE LOOKED at Lady Marion and found her sweet in her melancholy. There was strength in this woman as there is strength in a hunting leopard, and there was also a straightforward attitude, a fearless ability to look any man in the eye which a seeking gallant might find very disconcerting. This, then, was the riddle of this woman. The loveliness of a siren and the cour-

age and accomplishments of a knight. She had looked with longing upon men and had found them wanting. What strength and what ability the man must have who would at last win her affection—for she seemed afraid of giving that affection to any.

Mike strayed into Mendelssohn and, for a little time, lost them in the ecstatic depths of music. But he grew conscious at last of her eyes upon him, and his playing softened so that he could speak above it.

"He that would hold you would have the rarest jewel on earth, milady. Sorrow about yourself is like an oyster feeling badly about his pearl."

"I am told," she said, "that pearls are caused by a grain of sand irritating the oyster." And then she smiled. "I have told you of my woes. You have a right to tell yours."

"Ah, but you would not believe mine," said Mike. "You could not understand the story of a man trapped into a world quite foreign to him, playing a role which he does not understand, distrusting the reality of all things on earth and above, seeing no reason and having his own outraged, believing that all will fade too soon, and grasping the fleeting instants of joy which, like gentle clouds hiding a scorching sun, too often and too swiftly blow away."

She was looking at him now, seeing him fully. And what a strange fellow she found him. A swordsman, better than an expert like Braumley, who could play better than anyone she had ever heard play, who could look like a king and talk like a poet. Ah, yes, he was a very strange fellow. A strangely fascinating fellow. Here was not the straightforward bravery of Bristol, but the ultimate in gentility. Fearing weakness in her eyes, no man had ever played to her or said such fragile things to her before. But, then, she sighed, there would be some flaw in him. There must be. There was in every other man. Some failing, perhaps a lack of courage in war or clearness in thought— With a start she realized that she had quite forgotten about Bristol, for a trumpet on the ramparts was even then beginning to bray of his approach.

Mike stopped playing and stood up. Far off they heard doors groan open and footsteps bang upon stone and iron and salutes from officers in the fort. And then they heard, at the other end of the hall, the hoarse boom of Carstone's welcome.

Mike fingered the hilt of his sword. Tom Bristol had come.

A COLDLY quiet voice was in conversation with Lord Carstone. Judging from the tones, the welcome speech had not been accepted, and there seemed to be deadly business afoot. Lady Marion stood straighter, seemingly comprehending the situation perfectly; she advanced to the door and threw it open to go up the hall and into the room with her father and Bristol.

"My intelligences," said the clear, cold voice, which evidently belonged to Bristol, "are quite different, sir."

"Aye, but damme, fellow, he's a guest!"

"Guest be damned, sir. I'll have a look at this don."

"He's no don," came Lady Marion's protest. "He's Irish."

"And perhaps, milady, a liar in the bargain," said Bristol steadily.

Mike could not see them, for they were in the dining salon. But he could see the guard, which had evidently come up with Bristol, and he liked the sight not at all. These brawny lads lounged in the corridor, whispering among themselves. They were sea-booted, and clad in gay but stained jackets and half breeches, and two of them wore headsilks, indicating that they were French. Swarthy and cruel of visage, they were quite obviously brethren of the coast, and the only thing which held their voices down was their presence here in the governor's fort and the fact that they were Bristol's escort. The eight of them in the corridor were complemented by five more in the balcony above the courtyard steps, five who guarded the offerings which Bristol had brought. Some twenty bearers, Maroons and Caribs, had eased down their heavy loads and now sat upon them awaiting further orders.

Mike did not know how it could be, but he recognized three of those Maroons. Tall, blade-faced fellows they were, not much darker than the English and French brethren, and certainly cleaner and taller. Their names, those three, were Catshy, Zuil and Suyda. Mike was so intent upon his own danger that he took these things as they came and did not question. There were three fellows which he had ordered flogged and thrown to the sharks, and yet—here they were. They knew him! Mike moved back from the door before he was seen. If he was clever about it, they'd never get a look at his face.

Meantime the argument raged and Captain Braumley's demands were added to Bristol's. "In the name of the crown, sir, we owe ourselves this much protection. If he is a Spanish officer and managed his escape, why, odd bodkins! he'll carry back a complete record of the disposition of our forces and know our harbor and the ships in our fleets, and he'll know where he can land his troops! I say it's only fair that Bristol has a look at him."

"Aye," said Bristol. "Better now than to see him victor above a field of battle he has won by means of his inspection of this place. This, sir, is war!"

"Damme if you don't paint a gruesome picture of it, lad," said Carstone. "Well, peel your peepers at him, as you sailors say. But mind you don't try to act the boor that Braumley did." Carstone chortled heavily. "Blind me, captain, but you *did* look the clown, rolling down those steps!"

"Very well," said Bristol, "where is he?"

"In the drawing room," said the Lady Marion.

There was a sound of moving feet, and the buccaneers in the hall glanced at Bristol's face and loosened up their cutlasses in their bucklers and started to follow after.

"Stay!" said the Lady Marion. "Is this my home or a quarterdeck, sir?"

"Stand easy, lads," said Bristol. "The devil himself has never been known to fly."

The footsteps came on.

MIKE STOOD beside the window, his face in dimness, his shadow painted gigantically upon an ancient tapestry by the guttering candles. His very first glimpse of Bristol told him that here was a man who would have to be removed if he himself was ever to be safe again.

Bristol was lean and hard. His handsome face was keen and strong. His eyes were as pale and cold as Arctic ice. He wore his own blond hair, and it came in a metallic sweep down to the shoulders of his flaring cloak collar. There was a hard steel quality about the fellow which Mike felt would, in itself, turn the edge of a battle-ax.

"Michael O'Brien," said Lady Marion, "Captain Thomas Bristol. Captain Bristol, Michael O'Brien."

Mike bowed stiffly. Bristol nodded. Their eyes, since they had first seen each other, had caught and held and did not relax now for an instant. There was war in the atmosphere.

"I'm told," said Bristol, "that you were cast up by the sea after the wreck of a galleon. A fortunate escape."

"Aye," said Mike. "And from your bearers out there I suppose you to have had a successful voyage."

"Passing," said Bristol. "Would you like to look at the loot?"

The question was a trap to get him into the sight of those Maroons, Mike knew. And yet it seemed a good bait to grab.

"Why, yes. I wouldn't mind," said Mike. "How many ships and prisoners did you take, if I might ask?"

"Sufficient," said Bristol.

"A glass of wine, gentlemen?" said Lady Marion, putting glasses into their hands and pouring.

They drank without relaxing their vigils over each other. Carstone was uncomfortable, and shuffled his feet and coughed. Braumley hovered just inside the door, ready for instant flight.

"The Spanish will weep when they hear of your success," said Mike.

"Aye. The English have wept too long," said Bristol.

"I might be persuaded to take one of your voyages with you," said Mike.

"I suppose you might," said Bristol. "And now, if you would like to look at the loot—" He turned to Carstone. "With your permission—"

But Carstone, while a good merchant, was not quick on his feet when it came to such subtle byplay. He mistook Bristol's design, or saw it not at all, for he said. "What? Look at it in the dark? Damme, Bristol, I thought you said that the presents—"

"Are yours, milord," said Bristol sharply in disappointment. "Have in the chests, Scudder!"

THE WORD was passed, and the Maroons and Caribs again took up their burdens to bring them into the drawing room and strew them over it. Mike stood with his face out of the light, and Bristol had had no time to communicate his desire to the Maroons, and so they withdrew without noticing the guest.

Bristol flung open a few chests, and the candles made the jewels and gold pieces glitter and flame. He ran his hands through them and made them cascade back, letting some fall carelessly upon the carpet.

Carstone forgot all about this minor hostility and instantly began to open the rest of the chests and calculate their worth while Bristol stood back, still watching Mike. He seemed to find something deeper than a military menace in this stranger, for he was too brilliant, was Bristol, to fail to note that Lady Marion had sought to protect the fellow.

"And no prisoners for slaves?" said Carstone at last. "We've acres upon acres untilled for want of labor. And if you ran across galleys, certainly you brought their oarsmen with you."

"No galleys," said Bristol. "Only prisoners of war."

"Bah!" said Carstone. "There's no such thing existing as a state of war. Spain and England and France are all at peace. How can they be prisoners of war? There are fields lying fallow and cane to be planted. And the weaklings they empty out of English jails die like rats from this damned fever."

Bristol seized upon that. He faced the door and called. "Scudder! Have in Zuil for a message to the ships!"

Presently the tall Maroon came. He was loose of movement, very free, almost regal, for his father was a cacique. His lemon-colored body was proudly wound about with bloodstained calico to hide the marks of the Spanish lashes.

He did not bow to the company, but nodded to his captain.

"Zuil," said Bristol. "We've a few prisoners on the *Fleetfoot* which his lordship would like to see. Have them brought up."

"Aye, aye," said Zuil.

But Bristol did not let him go, and he cursed the man for not seeing the don there in the shadow. "Those on the *Fleetfoot,*" he repeated. "Dons. And we regret that Miguel Saint Raoul de Lobo is not among them."

"Aye, we regret it," said Zuil, a little puzzled by this loquacity in one so usually taciturn.

"Have them up right away," said Bristol, nearly swearing.

Zuil turned and went away. Bristol angrily drained off another glass of wine as a toast to eventual success.

"Been long in these waters?" said Bristol.

"No," said Mike.

"Wonderful place," said Bristol.

"Aye," said Mike. "Wonderful."

"Except for the fever," said Bristol. "That gets the best of them."

"Aye, it must," said Mike.

CONVERSATION languished as though words perished in this highly electrified atmosphere. Several more glasses went the rounds and Carstone happily spent the time inspecting the spoils in detail. Bristol was getting madder by the minute, for a diamond necklace burned in his doublet to be clasped about the throat of Lady Marion. What a hellish homecoming! His eyes strayed to Mike continually and promised themselves compensation for this.

At last Zuil came back to say, "The prisoners are in the yard below, captain."

Bristol sighed with relief. "We'll go out and look at them. All of us," said he. "And you, too, O'Brien, for you must see how low these dons can be reduced."

There was no refusing that without arousing further suspicion, and so Mike trailed. He was somewhat startled to recognize his own hat, wide of brim and dark of plume, upon the piano as he passed, for he did not recall landing with a hat. He put it on and drew it down to mask his features, and so got through the buccaneers and then the three Maroons he knew. The light was too bad and their suspicions too sleepy in this fort for them to take heed.

The prisoners were a mixed lot, many of them common sailors, battered and dirty and despairing, a few were soldiers and marines, stiffer but no less wretched. Two of them were officers, cloakless and swordless, but disdainful of their captors.

"Here, they are, your lordship," said Bristol. "And a sorry lot they be."

"Aye, but slaves are scarce," said Carstone. And he started down at one end of the line, two boys bearing flambeaux beside him to light the yard, feeling muscles and looking at teeth, oblivious of the surly eyes of the captives. Carstone commented happily on each, calling off the faults.

The two Spanish officers were suddenly straighter and taller, but it was not they who betrayed Mike. He had lagged behind beside Lady Marion, listening to the chatter among the others.

And now, as they came to a mere child in the line, a ship's cadet from a gentle family, there was a sudden cry of gladness. Chains notwithstanding, the tiny cadet threw himself out of the line and at the feet of Mike.

"Almirante! Almirante! Save me!" And he gripped Mike's knees, weeping aloud, repeating: "Save me, almirante!"

Mike kicked the child out of the way as gently as he could, but with speed. For down from the landing came the brethren, led by the three Maroons, and out from the scabbard leaped Bristol's rapier.

Stunned by his own activity, gripped, it seemed, by a gigantic power, dancing back with blade shrieking, Mike got the edge on the first Maroon. The Indian's cutlass went flying from the suddenly agonized hand, and Catshy was rolling over and over, pierced from navel to spine. There was a commotion in the line of prisoners, and then one of the officers had the cut-

lass and was breasting the tide which swept down the stairs. The flambeaux in the yard made it light below and shined into the eyes of the brawny lads coming down.

Mike was quite certain he was lost, for he could never stand these devils off with the help of just one officer!

Clank!

The prisoners had all been chained together, but now there was a shift. Each one was miraculously chained independently in such a way that he would be wielding his fetters as a weapon!

Lady Marion screamed, and Mike whipped about to find himself faced by Bristol. Their weapons engaged with fury, and then Bristol was suddenly yanked down from behind by the Spaniards and Mike whirled back to the steps in time to help block the rush of buccaneers.

It was a seething maelstrom of blades and cloaks, but it was brief. Soldiers up on the battlements were streaming down to join the fray, and these, too, had the disadvantage of having to come down narrow stairs, for the slaves-to-be had heavy wrist chains which they used to deadly purpose, crushing skulls and limbs at every sweep.

Over a courtyard slippery with blood and brains, Mike rushed to the gates, crying the Spaniards after him in their tongue. The flambeaux bearers had been ground underfoot, and the only light came from a moonless sky and a faraway harbor, and then from flaming powder. The furious volley splashed the courtyard redder still, and the balls whined by or thudded into bodies.

"The gate!" bellowed Mike. *"La puerta!"*

The three chained gangs of Spaniards sought to follow, one of them, the farthest away, flayed the soldiers with such ferocity that even it won through. Another volley crashed, and along the chains could be felt dead weights. Dragging their wounded and corpses alike, married to them by iron links, the Spaniards came up to Mike.

Four soldiers had surged from the sentinel boxes to stop the escape. The only light here was a lantern's dim beams, and it showed them a tall demon with a naked, dripping rapier in a lace-cuffed hand. Two knelt to fire, two drew.

Mike faced those guns with horror. At point-blank range even a muzzle-loading musket could not miss! And those two tunnels were lined upon his breast as true as though laid by a transit. And the linstocks were raised to the touchholes, and in a moment Mike would be torn to shreds!

Clank!

He had a steel corselet about him which he had not had before. He made a mental note to thank Hackett and, even as he acted, had a sudden chill of knowing that, so far, something had always happened to save him, but that he could not possibly continue to depend upon it. The hero, Bristol, might. But not Mike, the villain of the piece!

Mike's rapier tore out the throat of a soldier who had drawn and nearly in the same movement punctured the other where his belts crossed whitely.

And then another fighter blocked the way—Bristol! He threw himself at Mike with an icy fury and a strength which would have thrown down soldiers or sailors like empty bottles. But Mike caught the hilt of the other's blade with his own hilt and they stayed there, locked, pressing, faces but inches apart.

"You Spanish hellion!" snarled Bristol. "I'll never rest until I see you swing! In the eyes of the English, you'll be nothing but a spy from now until the day you're dead!"

"I'm not a pirate," said Mike through his teeth.

"God's blood, I'll have your heart for that!"

"And I," said Mike, "will probably have your Lady Marion. Out of the way, gutter sweepings!"

The gangs of Spaniards had halted for an instant, but now they swept over Bristol and battered him under and went racing through the gates.

Mike groped for a moment in the dark, for a ball had extinguished the lantern. He found the corpse of a soldier and grasped his powder horn. From another, a cannoneer who had rushed down from the walls, he snatched a burning linstock.

Then to the gang of Spaniards who waited for him he cried: "Shut the gates!"

MUSKETRY was going from the inner fort, but most of the soldiers had leaped up the walls in an attempt to sweep the Spaniards from the road below. Balls snapped about Mike and thudded into the wood of the gate. A squad was making a rush for the portals, and Mike narrowly missed being cut off from his men. He got the gate closed with Spaniard help and then emptied the horn at the foot of it, trailing the powder after him as he leaped back. He dropped the linstock's spark into the chain. There was a puff and then a swift sweep of greenish flame which raced back to the pile and swooped upward along each edge of the nearly closed doors. These, being of wood and subjected to such terrific heat, caught and blazed.

Mike, balls thudding all about him, sped after his rescued troops. Not yet was the light behind bright enough to show up the whole road, and in an instant they had turned the bend and were on the steep part of the trail which led to the town.

Mike urged them on when he reached them. They were shadows against the lighter dark, and for a moment he could not understand the dragging sound which went with them, or what cut down their flight. And then he trod upon a wounded man being dragged along by the others attached to his chain.

"Alto!" said Mike. "Captain, your cutlass here, sir."

It was gruesome and bloody work, cutting the corpses out of that chain, severing limbs which were less resistant to a blade than iron. Only two of

the wounded were able to stagger along with help. The others, knowing what lay behind them in English hands, begged for death, not abandonment.

And then Mike, about to order that death much to his own horror, changed that order. "Pick them up, you hulks. Are we English?"

They burdened themselves with the wounded.

The sound of the typewriter faded to nothing.

The burning gate and the musket fire had attracted attention in the town, and now buccaneers and some of the soldiers of the customs house came struggling up the hill through the hot night to investigate, arming themselves about with swords and pistols as they came. But their hurry was too great for torches.

"Into the brush!" said Mike.

The Spaniards dodged under the bushes and crouched there while the men streamed up. But Mike stood on the side of the road, crying: "Hurry! It's been attacked by the Spanish from the hills! Hurry!"

They hurried. And after three or four minutes the road was wholly clear. Mike led them down, straight upon the town. Behind them on the hill could be heard shouts and further firing, for the English had evidently concluded that if they had not been upon the road, then they had taken the trail to the beach which flanked the castle.

The buccaneers, heavy with pay and lust, had been well begun upon the evening, and those who could still walk had hurried to the castle's "defense." It was easy to get through the town. Drunken songs rolled out of the taverns, inert men lay in the gutters. The Spaniards were armed when they reached the dock. They threw themselves into longboats and, despite their chains, managed to row. The lights of the tallest ship attracted them, making a yellow pathway to them. And when they neared it they were again entertained by loud and bawdy verses from "The Grave at Gaverley" and "The Mermaid." After the custom of the brethren, there was no discipline in port, and this, the ship guard itself, was slopping with brandy to the point that they did not decry a boat or offer it salute.

The longboats came in alongside the main ladder, and Mike leaped up. The deck was badly lighted, but he could see men gaming and drinking on a tarpaulin over a hatch. They, in turn, did not see him against the blackness. Other men slept in the squat shadows of guns, empty pots beside them. Mike waved up his Spaniards, and it was not until their chains clanked upon the deck itself that they were seen.

The gamblers stared, round-mouthed, at these tatterdemalions and at the steadily held pistols in their hands.

Mike looked them over and said: "Ye'll make much better slaves alive than dead. Raise a voice and we'll let it out of the side of your throats. Captain Fernando, find the carpenter's chest and an anvil. Those chains are a mite too heavy for the rigging. Lieutenant Rescate, clap these beggars under hatches. And now, where's the cadet that gave it away."

"He's dead, almirante," said a soldier.

MIKE WALKED over to the gunwale and looked steadily at the fort on the hill. He walked aft and up to the quarterdeck and still stared at it.

When the sails were shaking out in the light evening wind, Mike again gave his attention to the boat. He had the lights knocked out and, with his helmsmen alert, began the task of working quietly past the fort, tense with the knowledge that they might receive a withering cannonade from there, darkness or no darkness.

He stood back, detached from himself, and heard strange terms issue from his lips. Not only was he giving the proper nautical orders, but also he was giving them in Castilian!

He could not speak Spanish, but he was speaking Spanish! He knew nothing about boats, and yet, with masterful ease, he was sailing one of a type three centuries vanished from the deeps!

Could this be Mike, man about town, diletante of the arts?

And how strange it was to find this all so common to himself! Here he had killed seven or eight men in twenty-four hours more or less, had engineered an escape from a fortress, had met the deadliest enemy he would ever have, was in command of a vessel of war, and . . . and—could it be, now that he thought of it?—fallen in love with the loveliest woman he had ever seen in any picture or any clime.

Could that have been Mike—Michael de Wolf—who doffed his hat so grandly and drew so wickedly and spoke with such gallantry and poise?

What strange power was this which decreed all these things?

They worked their way past the snoring fort and stood out from the island with the east trades sighing in the hemp and canvas aloft.

"Starboard a point," said Mike.

"Steady," said Mike.

Tall masts against the stars, cool wind against his cheek, the restive but soothing breast of the sea— What lay ahead of him now? He had heard himself set the course for Nombre de Dios. Did such a place exist?—though part of him seemed to know that it did and even recalled how it looked. And there—certainly they'd know him for a fraud.

Almirante Miguel Saint Raoul de Lobo, commanding his most Catholic majesty's fleets in the New World, commissioned to seek out and destroy the English and the French, pitted against buccaneers who fought like hop-headed wild cats and drank like barrels, pitted against Captain Tom Bristol, the coolest and toughest and cleverest of them all!

Mike shuddered and wrapped his beautiful cloak more tightly about him. The shadow of the helmsman showed up against the dully glowing binnacle. The soft hiss of sea came from under the *Fleetfoot's* stern. The long white wake faded into the dark behind and the path of a star reached out to them before.

"She's luffing her t'ps'ls," said Mike. "Bring the breeze farther astern."

Had he said that?

How did he know?

How— Why—
WHY?
And how would all this end?

VI.

Nombre de Dios was a sweat-soaked town, fried by sun, steamed by jungle, depopulated by fever, commanded by a martinet, shaken by earthquakes, worked by slaves and cluttered with great stacks of silver and gold.

Once there had been two-story houses here, but the earthquakes had taught the Spaniards better. Once there had been Maroons in the jungle behind, but those who were not dead and who had not been chained into the work gangs on the docks and in the forts had prudently taken themselves far back into the tangled hills. Once this had been a quiet curve of the shore; now it was the shipping point of all the gold which came by mule train across the Isthmus, and from here sailed the mighty plate fleet, carrying, ship by ship, a ransom which would have bought Cæsar.

There was yellowjack and malaria. There were scorpions and centipedes. There were bright parrots and chattering monkeys. There were masts in the shipyard and gay shawls upon the low balconies. There were Spanish soldiers in bright-yellow uniforms, Spanish sailors in tasseled caps and striped shirts, black slaves in hoarsely rattling chains, grand ladies in carriages, dogs in sunlight, potbellied Indian children snoozing in the shade, mules with silken-covered saddles or gay paniers, rowboats on blue water, fortress battlements against blue sky, and over it all the golden banner of Castile and Leon.

When the great gold trains came with their inconceivable wealth, merchants and Indians and gentlemen and ladies jammed the town's thin streets, but they did not linger, for lingering might be as expensive as one's life—such was the fever.

Mike sat in a long chair, cooling his hand with a drink. From this silk-canopied balcony stretched the town, swooping away down the hill to the harbor.

For the first month Mike had been fascinated by the intricacy of this place, by the brutality shown slaves, by the gagging reality of yellowjack, by the whole, mad colorful picture of Spanish life in the New World. But now Mike was bored. For another month he had languished. Little by little he had brought up seemingly concrete memories of his past. Without hesitation, he recognized people and called them by their right names and inquired properly after their children. But he had lived in a state of dread lest they suddenly discover that he was Mike de Wolf, not Miguel Saint Raoul de Lobo, lord and almirante. Now that dread had nearly vanished, for one and all they found him wholly credible and were most bowingly polite—all except one called Father Mercy and another, Lord Bagatela, governor of all this and captain of its forces.

Father Mercy was so repulsive that Mike had been at much trouble not

to be found alone with him. And Lord Bagatela was such a dismal bore with his tales of the last war and how he had won it for his most Catholic majesty —practically single-handed—and so jealous of the sweeping authority Mike had from that most Catholic majesty's hand that Mike was made most uncomfortable by him.

Only one man seemed to be impossible to shake, and that was Trombo. He was a gigantic creature with a blankly relaxed face, a small pin-pointed head with no brow at all, and an arm which could crush the life out of a man with one squeeze. Trombo went about clad in dirty white pants, his bare chest agleam with greasy sweat. He had no hair upon him and was a shade of bright yellow, as though he had been painted thickly. Trombo never, for one instant, let Mike out of his sight. And Mike had protested, but:

"Almirante señor, once I let you go and you were almost killed. When next the barbarian English touch you, Trombo shall be there and Trombo's great sword shall make the heads fly." Here came a dreamy expression, like a child lushing up an ice cream soda on a hot day. "Ah, yes, almirante señor, and the blood will spatter about like rain. Rain!" He laughed soundlessly and added: "And the other English will think maybe Mount Peele had exploded again! I, Trombo, shall teach them not to touch my almirante!"

That was that, and there he sat, knees drawn up to his chin, fondly regarding his admiral. It was enough to give a man screaming nightmares!

There were some divergencies from the usual in the scene which had at first made Mike's mind reel, but which he now accepted—being unable to do anything else. Monkeys chattered incessantly, night and day, and parrots screamed without rest. There were women in the streets who seemed to have no function but to parade endlessly, never stopping anywhere. The sea and the sky were never anything but blue—when seas are usually every shade in the spectrum at various times.

MIKE had been able to come to a definite conclusion regarding his predicament. He had no doubt that this was "Blood and Loot," by Horace Hackett, and that the whole panorama was activated only by Horace Hackett's mind. And what Horace Hackett said was so, was so. And what Horace Hackett said people said, they said. And when Horace Hackett said that the almirante waited two months for the repair of his gale-battered fleet and the arrival of ships from Spain to augment it, then the almirante did nothing for two months but wait. And if Horace Hackett forgot to complete a scenic effect, then it was incomplete. But if he generalized and said this was Nombre de Dios of 1640, then it *was* Nombre de Dios of 1640, with all the trimmings and the people. And if he said it was an ever-blue sea, then, b' God, the sea was bluish even at night. And if Horace Hackett stated that the parrots and monkeys screamed and chattered endlessly, so they did. And if women paraded continually, they paraded continually.

Mike understood now that the whole story ran in one limitless scene

which continued in all places together. But the scene of the story in particular shifted from spot to spot, from character to character, so that men were become puppets of the pen and, realizing it not at all, were put through actions to suit the plot. Mike knew now that he must have been described early in "Blood and Loot" as an accomplished swordsman, a talented sailor, and a brilliant strategist, for it would be like Horace to make his villains good and strong, the more to baffle the hero. Under the invisible spotlight of Horace's genius, Mike had carried through the situations splendidly. But, it was somehow horrible to suddenly begin to talk in stilted English or Spanish, to become poised and gallant and deadly, and to be swept along by a force which was wholly invisible and untouchable.

Mike had found himself, upon his arrival at Nombre de Dios, spending a great deal of time thinking about the Lady Marion and sighing for her company. It was real and deep and hurtful, and it made his nights restless.

Then Mike, pondering, had brought himself to face the fact that this love for the Lady Marion was a part of the plot, and that if he succumbed to that feeling, why then he was inevitably doomed. He knew how Horace Hackett plotted. Lady Marion would attract him. He would raid an English island in an attempt to carry her off. Bristol would be infuriated beyond reason by the success of the attempt and would move hurricanes to get at him and have the lady back. And that would be the end of Mr. Almirante Miguel de Lobo, spitted like a chicken upon Tom Bristol's lightning blade.

This, for a space, nearly smothered his love for milady. But in his dreams he kept seeing her, and at times like this his boredom tricked him into thinking fondly of her. And the first thing he knew he was furious with Tom Bristol for being the hero of this tale, for eventually getting the lady, for eventually stabbing the almirante.

There was a bare chance that Horace might break down and make a tragedy out of this thing, and if so, then it would be Tom Bristol who would die, and the Lady Marion would be Mike's and all would be well. But that could not be depended upon.

Mike saw his fate laid out in the neat pattern of Horace's plot. Already he had seen men die in agony upon this scene. Already he had drunk the blood of human beings with his rapier. And he did not doubt, when he found at last that he did not return to his own world, that he would meet his complete end behind the pages of "Blood and Loot." Horace Hackett, all unwitting, would murder his friend. And Mike disliked the idea of dying, not only horribly, but completely defeated and disgraced. No, it was not probable that he would get out of this story. And the hell of it was that this story was real—figment of Horace's imagination or not.

Wouldn't he like to tell Horace a thing or two now! Batting him on the head, caving in his side—were those polite things to do to your best friend? He could imagine Horace sitting there—dirty bathrobe swathed about his rotundity, half-empty coffee cup full of dead butts—being wittily incredulous.

And the more Mike thought about it, the madder he got. And the more he tried to forget her, the more he loved the Lady Marion.

NIGHTS he lay twisting about on sweat-soaked sheets, cursing his luck and fate. And just now, sitting on his shaded balcony, calm of face but mentally aboil, Mike de Wolf planned revolt.

Controlling that mob of seamen was impossible. They'd fought to loot—and they looted!

He'd show this Horace Hackett a thing or two. He'd take this story into his own hands!

He knew how it went, or could guess at it. How much time he had he did not know, for he understood that time in the world and time here were two different things—for here Horace merely had to say "three months went by," and so they did, day dragging after day, whereas it only took a second or two to hammer out those four words on the typewriter. It was possible then for him to get together a fleet that would really be a fleet and wipe the English and French out of these islands by an attack nothing could stop. It was also possible for him to refuse to take the field against Tom Bristol at all, but he knew that if he remained inert, then Bristol would come for him.

"You bothered," said Trombo with the air of one announcing the solution to months of high-gear mental effort.

"Why?" said Mike.

"You no see Zuilerma at all. She cry and not leave her room and say she is grown too old for her almirante. She not yet eighteen. Why you not like her?"

Mike gave a slight shudder. Usually Trombo talked decent Spanish, but now he spoke bad English. Evidently Horace Hackett had shifted his spotlight for a moment to Nombre de Dios. All right, let him shift it. To hell with Horace Hackett. He, Mike de Wolf, wouldn't talk!

"Letters come from Panama," said Trombo stubbornly. "Anne write and write and write and say why the almirante no send escort for her? She say she is not afraid of the fever here if it means she can see her almirante. She say she dead with worry about you, and why you not write her."

Still no answer from Mike. He felt a small thrill of triumph. He could keep from talking! Even though this was an obviously posed scene.

"You in love," said Trombo with finality.

"What?" cried Mike. "Nonsense!" And he was instantly sorry, for he doubted then his ability to run this scene.

"You in love. Fifty-'leven most beautiful women in New World die for sight of you and you in love. Why not whistle? Almirante whistle, any woman on earth run to him. He is the *almirante!* He is beautiful!"

"I want no women," said Mike.

"You in love," said Trombo. "You think I blind? You say what woman and Trombo take ship and get her and bring her back. Not good for you to love woman. You take her, you forget about her."

"You're treading on swampy ground, Trombo."

"You walking into fever if you not perk up. If you not think Trombo better go get this woman, then let Trombo go get Anne. Or send for Zuilerma. Or buy twenty-thirty slave girl. Or make love to governor's wife. She almost die whenever she look on you, and she plenty young and a great lady, too. Who you want you can have. You are the almirante! You are beautiful!"

"Stop it," said Mike. "Do you think if I actually wanted a woman I would not take her?"

"Well? Then why not take this one?"

"She . . . she is a long way away. And . . . she is English."

"English!" cried Trombo, leaping up in horror.

"Aye," said Mike quietly. "She is the Lady Marion Carstone, the sweetheart of Captain Bristol."

"The . . . the sweetheart of a pirate!" cried Trombo. "Oh, oh, oh, the almirante has been too much in the sun. The fever has him!" He held his head in his hands and rocked as though in pain.

"And," said Mike quietly, "I intend to have her, as a prisoner of war."

Trombo stopped. The despair went slowly from his face, to be replaced by pleasure. "This Captain Bristol, he is a terrible name on the Main now. He has a big fleet, but the almirante will stop him. Ah, ah, ah! To defeat him, to yard-haul him! To cut out his guts before his eyes and feed them to a dog! And to take his woman— Ah, that is revenge great enough even for the almirante! Ah, ah, my almirante, forgive me. I am blind. You are quiet because you plan this!"

"Aye," said Mike, aghast at feeling pleasure from such a gruesomely stated picture.

"Why . . . why, even Zuilerma can see sense in that!" cried Trombo. "When you have become bored with the English woman, you can give her to Zuilerma and Zuilerma will be pleased. She is clever with a knife, is Zuilerma—"

"No!" cried Mike. "I really love the Lady Marion, Trombo."

"Ah, love, pah! I saw you in love with fifty-'leven women. You take 'em, you get bored, you forgot 'em. There is Zuilerma. You heard of her beauty and fought and killed full two hundred Indians to capture her. And now you bored. You spend nights risking fever with a guitar under Anne's window, and now she begs you let her come to you and you not answer letters."

"This is different," said Mike severely.

There was rebuke in the tone, and so Trombo became silent. But the certainty of knowledge did not die from his face. He knew his almirante, and he felt much better about the whole thing. All that had to be done would be done.

BUT a gray shadow drifted over the shining hardwood floor and it was not to be as simple as that. Father Mercy had come in like a pallbearer, even more grizzly than ever. He had, quite obviously, been eavesdropping.

"My son," said Father Mercy, "I have come to pay a call."

"Delighted, father," said Mike. "Sit down."

"What I have to say I would rather say standing up, my son." And his corpse face remained still, lips unmoving though he spoke. "I have dissuaded the sale of English captives ever since you have known me, my son."

Mike looked at him insolently and sipped his drink. He felt a strong repulsion for this horror of a man, one that was not born out of Hackett. And so strong was it that Mike momentarily slipped away from the grip upon him.

"You soul-scavenging buzzard," said Mike. "When I pulled into this harbor you damned near had the town upside down, telling people that I ought to give you the captives I took. Well, to hell with you. They're English, and they're men, and if you crave autos-da-fé every day, use up Indians and leave white men alone. They're at the fort now, working. And I have them counted every day. And the first one that is missing will find me shelling that hell hole you call a religious prison! Now get out of here!"

Father Mercy gaped. "My son—they are heretics! The rack and the Iron Maiden alone can extract their sins. It is the only way to get them to believe and save their souls."

"Kill a man to save his soul. What's so damned valuable about a soul, you crow? Why tear a man's body to bits and send him to his God in chunks? I've a packet of orders in that strong box there which empower me above church and state, and if I so decree it, they empower me above God as well so far as you are concerned. You and your sadistic lechery ought to be wiped out of this town like I'd squash a centipede."

"Have a care, my son. I am a man of God, and as such I am more powerful in my influence than you in yours. These statements which you have made can, perhaps, be overlooked, though I have never had to listen to such blasphemy before." And, indeed, Father Mercy was shivering under emotional stress. "Just now I happened to overhear your designs upon an English girl. I came in to again demand the souls of those English you captured and I stay to demand that all English heretics landed here shall become the charges of our church. And this girl, too, must be delivered like the rest. The governor, Lord Bagatela, has just now said that he cannot give them up without your permission, and I have just told Lord Bagatela that I am about to report the matter to Spain via the first advice boat—and you cannot touch religious mails. Unless you promise this thing, I shall use every power of the church to have you removed from command and given over to our care, for now your blasphemy tempts me to report above all else. However, if you give me these captives, and if you promise me this"—he swallowed hard—"English woman, you are safe."

"Feed white flesh to your damned racks?" cried Mike. "I'll blow this town off the map first, and I've got the ships and guns to do it."

"You cannot force the hand of God, sir."

"God?" said Mike, suddenly thinking upon the true identity of this priest's god and vividly envisioning Horace Hackett. "God, did you say? Your god, sir priest, is as lecherous as thou. Now go and cease to drag your dirt on my floor!"

"Blasphemy!" chattered the priest. "You . . . you are mad!" And

he expected the heavens to cave in on him. "B-b-blasphemy!" And he fled with skirts streaming behind him from out of this ghastly presence.

Mike laughed and Trombo shuddered.

"Love," muttered Trombo, *"has* driven you mad, almirante. Father Mercy—will have you racked! And his report to Spain cannot be touched. You are *mad."* And he wept.

VII.

Mad or not, Almirante Miguel Saint Raoul de Lobo set sail from Nombre de Dios with bands playing, pennons streaming, and the gilded hulls of his galleons and round ships majestically reflected in the water. He was escorting the plate fleet past the leeward islands and the hands of his cannoneers itched to apply the linstock to the touchhole with English buccaneers as a target.

Mike, for all his outward decision, was fighting a mighty battle within himself. How he ached to attack St. Kitts as soon as this plate fleet was safely into the Atlantic! And why shouldn't he? He knew the defenses and the channel. He knew the positions of the forts and the disposition of the troops and very nearly could guess the number of vessels which would be on hand. To attack and take, and, if Buccaneer Bristol was not among the slain or the captives, then to hold the Lady Marion as hostage against future behavior—that was the indicated plan, and one in which he was certain he could succeed.

But Mike had slightly the edge of these other denizens of Never-never Land. While they were quite human and much alive, and while they supposed themselves in a world quite as concrete as the world from which Mike had come, they were not on talking terms with their deity. And Mike knew every plot twist of which Horace Hackett was capable. And he knew that even though this looked so neat, there must be something wrong with it. His captains had already mentioned its feasibility and had advised its operation. Even Father Mercy, with the prospect of putting a fair English lass upon the rack, argued austerely that it was good colonial policy. Aye, Mike told himself, there was something damned wrong with it if the others had all thought of it.

Sailing six points from the wind to beat through Mona Passage and ride the Gulf Stream to the Old World, the transports waddled along, bellies deep in the sea with riches. Striding the twenty paces up and down his quarter-deck on the *Josef y Maria,* Mike recalled, one by one, Horace Hackett's previous tales. Porpoises rolled along beside the ship, flying fish flashed in fright away from the white-toothed bows, sails to port, starboard and astern blazed white and red and gold against the achingly hot sky. Mike turned and turned again, soft white boots making little sound above the sigh of wind.

This world was so *real* to those who lived in it. They lived and were born and they got sick and felt pain and died. And they looked up into the blue, wholly unconscious that they might well hear the rattling of a typewriter's keys and smell the horrible pipe which Horace Hackett clenched in

yellow teeth. From whence had this world come, whither would it go? These people all thought they remembered long pasts and ancestors. They were convinced that their progeny would continue up the ages. They believed in their ingenuity and trusted their calculations. And yet—

Mike could never remember a story in which Horace Hackett had refrained from killing his villain. The hero triumphed, got the girl and slaughtered the evil one. Well, Mike was the "evil one," but he did not care about being slaughtered.

"If I could only figure it out," muttered Mike. "If I could turn this plot and get Bristol—" Yes, there was a chance, for Horace Hackett was not always concerned with each scene simultaneously. Right now, sailing along, Mike knew that he was free from Hackett's direction. And, being free, he could talk as he pleased and act as he pleased and—

Supposing . . . supposing he did not wind up at St. Kitts. Supposing he went somewhere else, and when Horace had the attack all figured out for St. Kitts, the Spanish fleet was some hundreds of miles hence!

Mike grinned.

The ships swept grandly onward.

He would control this strange love for the Lady Marion. He would refuse to fall into such an obvious trap. He would wipe the English from the Main and leave Tom Bristol much alone. Aye!

Hell, now he was doing it by himself.

Aye.

Accordingly, some days later, the naval vessel hauled yards, and while their brilliant canvas fluttered from luff to leech, dipped their flags in salute to the onward-surging round ships. The long Atlantic swell made their gun tackles creak and jumped pans off the galley stoves, but they lay in the trough for an hour to make certain that the plate fleet was out on the broad highway, unpursued by buccaneers, headed for Spain with the Caribbean far behind. They wore ship then and, forming a long line, braced and steadied for Mona Passage.

"It might be easier," said Fernando in the chart room, "to stand out and come down on St. Kitts with the wind a-quarter."

Mike's compass poised over the crudely drawn parchment chart which showed things as though the view was from above the horizon and not the zenith. He looked at Fernando.

"Perhaps," said Mike, "we'll not attack St. Kitts."

"But . . . but I thought your orders, sire—"

"My orders are most general, captain. I am supposed to wipe out the English, and there is more than one English settlement in the New World."

"But I had heard— That is, the rumor had it—"

"That a woman was involved?"

"Something like that, sire."

Mike grinned. "Fernando, have you ever thought much on destiny?"

"Why—no, sire. The church—"

"Destiny is a marvelous thing. Circumventing destiny is possible only by refusing to do the obvious."

This seemed like blasphemy to Fernando, and he remained silent.

"Strategy is of the same stuff," said Mike. "Men are lifted into key positions, they know not why. They strive and fail or succeed, still not knowing why. They have the breaks or they have not the breaks. But, in a limited scope, they can determine their own futures."

It certainly did sound like blasphemy, but Fernando, in obedience to his almirante, nodded.

"And so," said Mike, "you will issue orders to officers commanding the rest of the fleet to the effect that we are proceeding not to St. Kitts, but a place much nearer to us. Tortuga."

"But—why?"

"There is an English and French settlement there. There will be vessels there which could ultimately aid Bristol in attacking our towns and colonies. It is the buccaneering hotbed of the Caribbean—and if we have any luck, the buccan hunters will all be out leveling their sights upon wild steers while we level ours upon their settlement. We will land and destroy the place—with all due humanity, of course—and we'll burn what ships we find there, thus weakening Bristol's future fleet. Then if Bristol attacks, what men he would normally get from Tortuga will be safely inside our prisons or quietly dead."

"Why—that's brilliant!" said Fernando. "And that woman—I mean in St. Kitts— Father Mercy was wrong in saying that you—"

"There are spies. All Indians are spies. Perhaps, captain, that was a remark calculated to disturb the peace of mind on St. Kitts and make our attack on Tortuga simple. Perhaps."

Fernando beamed with admiration. And then: "The course, sire?"

"West sou'west, b' half south," said Mike. "Locate a sea artist in our fleet who has been in there and have him come aboard the flagship here as pilot."

"Si, si, almirante," said Fernando, and hurried away from the cabin.

Mike sat contemplating the chart before him. He was not particularly amazed any more by these sudden abilities of his. First as a swordsman, then as a linguist. And now out of the clear he found himself a naval strategist. But he wasn't giving it much thought. He was too pleased with himself for having bested his own desires and having turned the tables on one Horace Hackett.

TORTUGA, so named because, as now, it looked like a gigantic turtle's back awash in the sea, hove up with the dawn. A silent fleet was coasting along Haiti's north at two knots, banners but half seen from ship to ship in the mist.

Mike stood in the great cabin of the *Josef y Maria* and addressed his

captains, who had gathered from the ships for his orders. They sat quietly drinking their morning coffee, their aristocratic faces without trace of concern for the forthcoming battle. Mike, booted and cloaked for action, paced up and down the great stained-glass stern ports as he spoke, the sun coming up to silhouette him in the scarlet flame of dawn.

"The ships will attack as outlined," concluded Mike. "The landing parties will get away as soon as the harbor vessels are smashed, and these will take the forts as I have outlined. But I wish to make one thing clear to you, gentlemen. We are captains and sailors of his most Catholic majesty's navy, and we will conduct ourselves as such. There will be no ravishing of this town. There will be no useless slaughter. We are here on a military objective and civilians are not fair game. I will enforce this order with all the authority at my command."

The captains looked wonderingly at one another, for, after all, weren't these people of Tortuga English and French? But orders were orders, and they nodded politely, drained their coffee and went on deck to call for their boats. In a short time they were aboard their own vessels. In an hour the *Josef y Maria's* prow was thrusting past the earthworks of eastern Tortuga, while the lead ship of the other line readied to blast out the fortresses of the Haitian shores.

The battle flag on Mike's flagship dipped.

A rolling broadside shook the very sea. White smoke whirled out to darken the mists. The trumpeters of the fleet knifed the morning with their calls and signals. The marines rapped out a hysterical background to the cannon with their muskets. The forts on either side of the channel were churned vales of flying masonry from which scrambled men who sometimes almost got away.

The Spanish raid on Tortuga had begun.

Six hours later the battle was over.

The anchorage had been but sparsely populated with ships, except for fifteen merchantmen which had put in there for food and stores and some twelve buccaneer craft which were undergoing, for the most part, overhaul. The merchantmen had gaped at the Spanish fleet in all its flaming glory and had struck almost to a man, but the buccaneer vessel, even though careened and in no position whatever to give resistance, knew that even a small fight was better than no fight and an end on a Spanish gibbet. These latter ships had fought furiously if unavailingly to oppose the landing on the island. They were now blazing wrecks filled with roasting corpses.

Tortuga had been attacked at an unfortunate time—for Tortuga. Its inhabitants combined the trade of hunting and curing meat with raiding on the Main, and at this season nearly the entire male population was deep into Spanish Haiti, drumming up the wild beef which had, over the years, retreated to higher ground away from the coast. Accordingly, there were very few in the forts—only those who had been hurriedly rushed there to man the

cannon upon the first appearance of the Spanish. Shot and powder had been fed the guns in some cases by women and children, and these were now dead in the rubble.

A few of the houses on the island offered the appearance of fortresses, and these were shelled heartily by the Spanish ships before Mike could pass the order.

A company not more than a hundred strong had drawn a battle line upon the sand to oppose the landing of five hundred Spanish marines. And now the sand was a dark, thick red. Onward had swept the landing party, to cut off the retreat of men from the forts, and shortly after, the golden banner of Castile and Leon was flowing over Tortuga.

Six hours and the battle was over.

MIKE had recall sounded. But in the din ashore it might as well have been whispered. Mike had the other vessels signaled, but no signalmen answered. The anchorage lived with longboats filled with Spaniards. The jungle behind the town moved with yellow-jacketed marines. A signal gun bidding them return to their ships went unnoticed.

Too long had these Spaniards lost to the buccaneer to show mercy now. And the sky began to blacken with the smoke of burning buildings, mingling with the smoke of charring ships. With cutlass and crossbow, musket and lance, the population of Tortuga was being slaughtered to the last child.

As soon as he realized what was happening, Mike rallied the crew of the *Josef y Maria* which was still aboard, poured them and his marines into the boats and drew them up on the beach. At their head he set out to quell this madness. But a hundred yards into the town his men thinned, dribbling away one by one, hungry after loot and wine and death, and Mike was left upon the smoking street, alone save for Trombo.

With the flat of his sword and the might of Trombo's arm, Mike sought to stop the massacre. Women fled from doorways to be seized or struck down before they could cry out. The drunken marines flung all possessions from the homes and ripped them apart, searching for valuables. They could not hear Mike's voice. Old men and priests were being tortured to discover the hiding of money in the hills.

The place was a howling shambles with walls caving in, smoke everywhere, screams of agony and wails for quarter on all sides. Dead and wounded sprawled in the dust. And sailors and marines rushed on in search of more loot, more women, more brandy and rum. Five thousand devils in yellow and blue gutting the heart from Tortuga's twenty thousand women, children and old men.

Mike, sweating and furious, laid about him with his rapier, powerless to bring any men to recognize him and failing, in his anger, spitted them and slashed them down. But it was for nothing that Trombo strove so mightily with him, and by midafternoon Mike gave it up, sinking down upon a stone

step of a house not yet burned, holding his head in his hands, sick with the horror of it and the realization of what he had loosed.

"They mad and drunk," said Trombo, trying vainly to understand why the thing had to be stopped. "Tomorrow they listen to you."

"Tomorrow!" cried Mike. "Tomorrow there won't be a thing alive on Tortuga."

"They all English and French," shrugged Trombo.

"I'll court-martial the whole fleet!" vowed Mike. "I'll have them under hatch all the way to Nombre de Dios. I'll string them up by their thumbs and yard haul them and . . . and—" He relapsed into apathy.

Trombo suspected sunstroke as the cause of this strange mental quirk, and he sought about for something to quench his almirante's thirst and take his mind from the crew's disobedience. Of course, a man is always angry, thought Trombo, when his men refuse to obey him. He looked up at the white walls of this so-far-spared home. It was bigger than most, and it ought to be richer. Gold and good wine whetted Trombo's appetite. He made sure his almirante was all right, and then, throwing his shoulder against the door with all his mighty strength, caved the portal as though it had been built of sand.

MIKE LIFTED his head from his hands and wondered where Trombo had gone. He shouted for him once or twice, but he could not hear his own voice in the bedlam of the town. He turned and saw that the door of the place was open and, suspecting, got up to look in. Almost immediately he found Trombo. The giant was carrying a flagon of brandy, which he proudly set down and from which he poured a drink for his almirante.

Past them, from the street, dashed several sailors, who instantly went about the work of ransacking the place for money and jewels, paying no heed in their drunken eagerness to Mike. And a moment later the place was jammed with men. Upstairs there were screams and a pistol shot. Trombo picked up Mike for fear of what Mike would do and carried him into the road.

The smoke was getting thicker, until it was almost impossible to find anything but black in the sky. Red flames leaped high here and there to increase the terrible heat. Panting Spaniards fought among themselves over booty and, collecting it, threw it away and dashed on in the hope of better.

From another large house the steady bang of firing proceeded. Three groups of Spaniards had gathered there to storm the place, but they had little organization and rushed forward, only to stumble and fall grotesquely under the hammer of slugs from the roof of the flat-topped structure.

Now and then a gay headsilk was seen to ripple up there and perhaps eight or nine buccaneers were making a last stand of it. The heap of bodies around the place grew slowly, and then from the beach came fully thirty gunners with a cannon at the end of ropes. They swiveled the weapon around and crammed its mouth with round shot. It roared and bucked and a hole was in the wall. The sharpshooters on the roof got the gunner and then his

successor. The men changed the angle of sight and poured a bucketful of musket balls into the smoking muzzle. Chips and splinters flew from the raised edge about the roof. The next load was round again, and another section of the wall was smashed in. With a cheer, the sailors and marines poured through the breech and swarmed up to the roof, though several were dropped down the stairs with shots from above, impeding the progress of the rest.

Trombo gave Mike another drink of brandy, and Mike sat in the shade, looking somberly at the futile action in the house.

Screams and curses sounded on the roof amid the clang of steel on steel and, shortly, down came the successful stormers, lugging a few guns, which they threw away in the street. One of them was buckling on a sword belt, but decided he didn't like it and cast it aside. Nine Spaniards were employed in a quarrel over booty which Mike could not see. They came closer to the doorway, hauling something.

MIKE SUDDENLY leaped into the house and snatched the pistols from his sash. They were dragging a woman with them and still fighting to get a cutlass away from her. Her face was bruised and darkened with powder grime. Her dress of fine silk was ripped from shoulder to waist. And even now she got free and cut at one of them. They bore her down to the floor, and, by stamping on her fingers, got the cutlass away from her. Trombo had been much amused until he saw the expression on his almirante's face as Mike stalked forward.

"Almirante!" cried Trombo in fear. "They are too mad to know you! They will kill you!"

But Mike was deaf, for the woman beneath those battle stains was the Lady Marion!

At point-blank he let a sergeant have a ball in the stomach and a sailor the other in the face. And then his rapier was out and shimmering greedily.

"Let her go, you illegitimate sons," snarled Mike.

They leered drunkenly at him and recognized him not at all, for he, too, was blackened and his lace was torn. They let go the Lady Marion and sought to bring up weapons against him. The rapier licked the life from two as swiftly as two seconds fled, and then Mike was smothered in their rush.

A mighty roar was above the pile, and men were yanked away to have their heads bashed in against the walls. Shortly Trombo had the last one at squirming arm's length while Mike retrieved his sword and staggered forward toward the Lady Marion. This was the only egress from this room, and so, trapped, armed again with a cutlass, she waited for him.

"Miguel Saint Raoul de Lobo," said Mike bitterly. "Admiral of this rabble. Your arm, milady, so that I can escort you to the safety of my flagship."

She started to object, and then understood the folly of staying here. She straightened up and, with a slight curtsy, took his arm.

VIII.

THE FLEET was afraid of Mike, but behind his back even the officers raised a knowing brow. Mike had changed these past few months, and perhaps some of the steel of his character was truly entering into him, for he had punished the rape of Tortuga with such thoroughness and attention to detail that half the men bore the mark of the bastinado and the other half wore the scars of Mike's withering beration. All ships were on half rations, despite the gigantic mound of stores which had been carried away from Tortuga. Marines, staring court-martial in the teeth, stalked outside storerooms and by the water casks.

"Sire," said long-faced Fernando, "you breed mutiny. These crews live like rats and die like mice under fever. Was it so terrible that they loosed their passions upon the English and French. After all, sire, think upon what the English and French have done to us!"

"Wrath begets wrath," said Mike.

"But we are armed to meet it."

"The Spanish colonies are not. One by one they'll be sacked. We've given Bristol and his hellions the excuse they need to sweep the Spanish from the Main."

"We can destroy them."

"If three pirate vessels had run into Tortuga last week while this fleet was unmanned, we would have been sunk to a ship."

"But they did not," said Fernando brightly.

"And now every criminal and thief in the jails of France and Spain will be launched into the Caribbean to mauger the King of Spain's beard. You're a pack of fools, Fernando."

Fernando flinched, for he was too high born to bear insult. "I repeat, sire, that you breed mutiny."

"Then, sir, I'll deal with the fleet as one deals with mutineers." He felt a shadow fall upon the room and looked up to see Father Mercy. "What gives you permission to come in here?" demanded Mike.

Father Mercy bowed and smiled until it seemed his face would crack.

"Why so pleased?" demanded Mike.

"The English captives, my son, are all safe under hatch, waiting for the church in Nombre de Dios."

"And that tickles your fancy," said Mike. "They are my prisoners, padre."

"Would you profit at the hands of God?"

"No," said Mike, "but you would. I repeat that they are mine, to do with as I like. Forget them."

"For a price," said Father Mercy, rubbing his hands, which gave out the sound of sandpaper.

"You bargain with me now," said Mike.

"You have in your cabins, my son, a heretic of . . . ah . . . especial interest to me. I will trade you your other prisoners for her."

Mike stood up, angry. "Listen, you stinking fraud, if you say one more word about captives or about Lady Marion, I'll . . . I'll have you torn over your own rack! Now out before I change my mind and drill you where you stand." He reached for a pistol, and Father Mercy almost fell over himself getting out of there. But he had the temerity to thrust his scaly head back in and say: "Think upon it. Your prisoners and your commission for one silly English heretic. Is it a fair trade, my son?"

Mike threw the pistol at the face and it vanished.

Fernando was grave. "Almirante, there is something strange about you. That was a father of the church, and yet— Don't you know it is madness to try to oppose such as he?"

"I have a fleet and he has a rosary," said Mike. "I leave it to you to discover which one fires the heaviest broadside."

"I think," said Fernando, leaving, "that you'll discover that it's the rosary."

MIKE SLUMPED down in his chair and stared at the door, which was now closed. He could hear the hiss of water from the open stern ports of his cabin and the ornate lamp swung rhythmically to and fro from the beams. He sat there for quite a while and then, with a shrug, poured out a drink.

There was a footfall at his side and he saw Lady Marion there. She had repaired her gown and removed the stains, and after much rest looked herself again.

"I could not help but hear," said Lady Marion. "I am causing you a great deal of trouble."

"They pillaged against my orders," said Mike. "I am either almirante or I am not."

"If I know aught of sailors, such treatment is liable to be fatal."

"You know buccaneers," said Mike. "These are soldiers and sailors of Spain, not gutter sweepings and criminals."

"You imply an insult, I think."

"Think as you please," said Mike.

"I do," said the Lady Marion. "I know quite well that all this punishment, for instance, is to impress me with your own haloed innocence in the matter. Perhaps you count on my taking back word to St. Kitts that you aren't the demon you are painted. Well, sir, I know you now."

"Know me, do you?" said Mike.

"For a very clever and forceful gentleman," said the Lady Marion, "whom, in other circumstances, I might come to admire, if not for his mercy, at least for his audacity."

"Your praise is somewhat cold," said Mike.

"Aye, perhaps it is. I owe you my life, you think, forgetting that your

fleet put my life in jeopardy. You are clever, but not quite clever enough, sir."

"You are conceited," said Mike, "to believe that I attacked Tortuga because I had heard you had gone there. I had not heard anything of the sort. You were sent away from St. Kitts because your father expected an attack on that place. I attacked Tortuga for the same reason—and to destroy possible pirate vessels and to weaken the defense of St. Kitts."

Her face was crimson. "You imply, sir, that I think so well of myself that your desire of me could cause what you have done!"

"That," said Mike, "is what I imply."

"The only answer you have, sir, to make that a lie is to send me by advice boat and have me set down on St. Kitts."

"And that," said Mike, "is something I will not do."

She smiled, again at ease. "And why not?"

"Because," said Mike, "as much as I detest blowing away your cloud of self-esteem, I must hold you only because you are hostage against the behavior of Tom Bristol."

She stood. "If you for a moment think that Bristol will be stayed by such a thin threat, you are mad. He knows better than to trust any Spaniard, and would expect to find me dead, whether he behaved or not. No, milord, you won't stop Tom Bristol. And you'll not succeed against him when he comes!"

"You," said Mike, "are more a fool than I thought you at first. To deny that I love you is folly. To deny your beauty is foolishness. But your charm is quite safe in my care, milady, for I've no taste for playing the part of a bungling buccaneer."

She crimsoned again and, turning, slammed her cabin door behind her.

A FEW SECONDS later Mike was again appalled at himself. Why had he talked that way? It would have been so simple to have smoothed it all out. What was wrong with him? Here he was divorcing himself from fleet and church and from this woman as well— But his words could not be recalled. He—

His words. *His* words. HIS WORDS!

Suddenly he shook an angry fist in the direction of the sky. "Damn you, Horace Hackett! So I'm to wreck my fleet, am I? So I'm to fall in love like a puppy with this English girl, am I? I'm to bowl myself over by opposing the church, and then I'm to be murdered by your bucko-boy Bristol. Well, to hell with you and your damned typewriter! You're going to get something more than you expected before this thing is done!"

It was an empty boast, and Hackett's attention was now elsewhere—that he knew.

But God! He couldn't just sit here and walk straight to his death! Death was such a terribly permanent affair!

TO BE CONCLUDED.

THE GODS GIL MADE

by ROSS ROCKLYNNE

● Gil molded little figures out of dictating-machine record scrapings — and ye Gods! Could they talk when they came to life!

Illustrated by M. Isip

"DEAR SIR: I am the god of all dictating machines made by the Talkalek Co. Very truly yours."

Gil Lassiter, his thin, perpetually work-harried face bent over the interior of a dictating machine that wouldn't fix, went slightly rigid. His long fingers jerked so badly that the tiny screwdriver slipped out of the head of the screw. The screw, a microscopic thing, fell into the awful complexity of the machinery that was driving him mad. He remained in that rigid position for a short second, then shook the hair out of his eyes to look at the radio. The radio was off.

A chill coursed up his spine. He straightened his underweight body,

carefully placed the screwdriver on his scarred tool bench and turned around. His stomach started to boil.

He was looking at his desk, which occupied one third of the two-by-four office. It was a plain, varnished affair, scratched liberally on top where his shoes had gouged away part of the paint, and burned all around the edge, where cigarettes had consumed themselves. There were a number of papers —letters, bills, phone notations, service-call slips—piled loosely on the desk, and on them was a paper weight.

Gil's stomach continued to boil. The reason for this was that the paper weight had somehow assumed a look of animation.

As he stared, the paper weight jumped off the stack of papers. Under the impetus of a steady wind blowing from the open window, the papers rose in a cloud and breezed around the office.

The paper weight came to the edge of the desk, grinning up at Gil.

"Dear Lassister:" he said apologetically, grinning maliciously. "So sorry. But where the hell do you think you get off, using *me*, god of all dictating machines made by the Talkalek Co., to hold your damned old papers down? Regards."

"I don't care if you're Jehovah," Gil said stupidly, "you're nothing but a paper weight. Assume your normal position before I go stark, raving mad."

"Nuts with that." The paper weight sat down, dangling his muscular little legs over the edge of the desk.

To all appearances, he was a little man, about six inches high. Although the proportions were good, he had lots of angles and plane surfaces on his body; but that was because Gil, not being a Greek sculptor, had done the best job he could—which was pretty good. Too, the paper weight's hide was a mottled black in color, but that was because he had been carved out of cylinder wax. The one thing Gil had not included was animation, which the paper weight undeniably had plenty of.

"Nuts with that," said the paper weight, his black, direct eyes holding Gil's. "I'm a god. A pretty powerful god, too. Sincerely. P. S. I could play hell with your dictating machines if you didn't do everything I wanted you to."

Gil tottered backward and fell nervelessly into his swivel chair. He stared.

"I don't get it," he panted. "You sit there talking and moving around, and you act as if I should take it as a matter of course. I can't. I'm getting excited. I'm getting scared. This is unnatural. You know it is. You're inanimate. I carved you. I made you out of the shavings of a hundred cylinders the Marshal Silk Corp., sent in last week. I melted the shavings down and carved you out for a paper weight so papers wouldn't go flying around the office. Now the papers are flying around anyway!"

"I'm made for something better than that," the self-proclaimed god of all dictating machines made by the Talkalek Co. asserted. "For instance, the other god and I are going to put this business of yours back on its feet again." He swung his legs, regarding Gil evilly.

VOICE shavings. The thought simmered in Gil Lassiter's mind. Voice shavings. This little imp was made out of the shavings of a hundred cylinders which had been filled with the voice transcriptions of anywhere from five to a dozen big executives. So the god was talking. And living. His brain sagged. There were two trails he could take.

One was to think about it, and go comfortably mad; then he wouldn't have to worry about the local branches of Talkalek and Vocaphone—the only two dictating-machine manufacturing companies in the world—driving his Rebuilt Dictating Machine & Servicing Co. out of business—which they would do, eventually. The other way was just not to think about it.

He struggled groggily erect on the swivel chair.

"I don't think you're a dictating-machine god," he whispered. An idea leaped into his head. He got unsteadily to his feet. He rolled out the dictating machine he had been working over.

He pointed at it triumphantly. "If you're a god, go ahead and fix this machine. I dare you."

"My God," he thought to himself, thinking of the agony that machine had cost him, "this is going to be wonderful!"

"Easy!" The god snapped his tiny fingers. He flexed his powerful little legs and jumped across to the machine. In the next second he had hurtled back, landing in a crouch on the desk. His face was twisted furiously.

"A Vocaphone!" he screeched. "I couldn't fix a Vocaphone if I wanted to—which I wouldn't. Come to think of it, I'll fix it so it never works!"

He leaped onto the machine again, hovered there a split second, then leaped back, bewilderingly fast.

Gil stared at the machine. Nothing had happened to it visibly, but Gil felt something *had* happened to it. Part of the awful truth came to him. The Talkalek god would never miss an opportunity to destroy, or render inoperative, all Vocaphones, because Vocaphones competed with the sale of Talkaleks. The first certainty of real disaster struck Gil. The Rebuilt Dictating Machines & Servicing Co, was facing a major calamity!

He backed up toward his tool bench, forehead wet with sweat.

"You said something about you and another god putting my company on its feet again?" he inquired shakily. "What other god?"

"The one you're going to make. Another god, exactly like me, made the same way you made me. For one thing, he'll give me companionship, and for the next, he'll make a good slave. Together, we'd make your business pay. With two gods working for you who could cause dictating machines to break down for no apparent reason, money would roll in! You'd begin to sell lots of Talkaleks. You could buy up old machines which apparently weren't any good, bring them back to us to have the spell taken off, and then sell them at a one-hundred-percent profit. Sincerely."

"What about Vocaphones?"

The god shrugged. "Naturally, they'd have to go. But for your peace of mind, we'd weed them out slowly. There isn't room enough in the world for both Talkalek and Vocaphone. You know that yourself." The god appeared annoyed with Gil.

Gil picked up a heavy-weight hammer behind his back.

He panted: "There's only one thing wrong with your system."

The god regarded him suspiciously. "What?"

"I've prided myself on my honesty, and that's the way I've always run my business. Understand?"

He walked slowly toward the god, hands behind his back.

"I'm an honest man," said Gil, and brought the hammer up over his head, and down, in a vicious arc. His timing

was perfect. Nothing the size of this god could possibly get out of the way in time. It was a foregone conclusion to Gil, even before the hammer hit, that god fragments were going to be scattered around the office in a split second.

The hammer hit with shattering force —*clunk!*

GIL WHIRLED, agonized, as he heard the tiny, inhuman laughter.

The god of Talkaleks was standing atop the cylinder of the only workable machine in the office.

"So!" he snarled. "You'd try to murder me! *Me!* Ha! It can't be done—not any way *you* know of!"

Suddenly the cylinder began to whirl. The little god ran on it like a squirrel in a cage. All the while he was laughing evilly.

He shook his tiny fist.

"I gave you your chance, Lassiter. I asked you to make another god. All right, I ask you again! Disrespectfully yours."

"No!" croaked Gil, his glazed eyes on the rotating cylinder. "No! Disappear! Get off the world! Get out of my sight! I don't want any gods around. You make me nervous!"

"P. S. That isn't *anything* to what you're going to be—shortly!"

The god began to blur. He seemed to melt down into the swiftly whirling cylinder. Gil caught a last glimpse of the evil, mocking eyes before the whole body disappeared.

He was alone in the office.

The cylinder stopped whirling.

"Crazy!" Gil gasped hoarsely. "Crazy!" He mopped his forehead with a trembling hand, and rising, crept aimlessly around the office, trying to convince himself that what had just happened couldn't happen—ever.

He sat down, trying to calm himself, his hands between his thin knees. As if he didn't have trouble enough, what with the local branches of Vocaphone and Talkalek trying to take away the companies he was servicing and selling rebuilt jobs to. Now a god—a *god!*—had to come on the scene; moreover, a god who hated Vocaphones!

After a while, still shaking, he crept around on the floor, picking up the papers the wind had blown off the desk. He put a book on the stack.

"That's what I should have done in the first place," he chattered to himself.

The phone rang. He picked it up, mumbling: "Rebuilt Dictating."

"Mr. Lassiter? . . . Peabody's." A man's voice; a voice with a note of consternation and fright in it. "Something's—happened. To our dictating machines." His voice went husky. "Somebody has been telling them—*things.*"

"Things?" said Gil.

"Things," said the man at Peabody's faintly.

"I'll be right over," said Gil, turning green.

He hung up. He woodenly got his hat and coat on. He picked up his tool kit. The phone rang again. Dunlap & Dunlap, Insurance Brokers.

"Right away," said Gil in a sickened tone. He hung up. He opened the door, started to turn out the light.

The phone rang again.

Gil hurriedly turned out the light, locked the door and went for the elevator.

THE OFFICE at Peabody's was peculiarly empty of girls.

The office manager looked as if he were about to faint.

"They're in the ladies' washroom," he

whispered furtively. "They think we—Mr. Smythe, Mr. Morton, Mr. Bradford—have been playing tricks. They made us feel like fools. But even the unused cylinders tell them."

"Tell them what?" said Gil stupidly.

"Not tell *them*—tell *jokes*," the office manager whispered throatily.

"Are they funny?" Gil wanted to know, moving toward the nearest dictating machine.

"Some of them." The office manager giggled nervously. "Some of them are—corny."

Gil picked up one of the voice tubes, held it to his ear, turned the needle over to "Listen."

He pressed the cylinder control. The cylinder started to whirl.

The machine started to speak back, in Mr. Morton's voice.

"—well, this young fellow was bored to death. After all, it was a one-horse town, and he still had two weeks to stick around. He got hold of the hotel owner and put his problem up before him. The hotel manager, properly sympathetic, said, 'I'll tell you what you do. Go down Wright Street until you get to Hogan's Alley. There's a flight of wooden stairs there. Go up to the first landing, and turn to your left, and push open the first door you see. It'll be dark, but you'll—" The voice went on and on. Gil kept getting redder and redder. He hung up.

The office manager giggled.

"The girls screamed at that one, most of them, but the others ran for the ladies' washroom. They think Mr. Morton—" He waved his hand helplessly.

Gil took the cylinder off, put an unused cylinder on. He listened in horror to an old, old story about a traveling salesman.

He moved onto another machine, getting redder every second.

He listened.

"So this Siamese twin said, 'I think I'll go for a walk.' The other one said, 'Oh, don't tear yourself away.'"

"That one wasn't so—bad," the office manager said, almost proudly. "I dictated that one—I mean, it *sounded* like me."

"But most of them are—bad? Even on the clean cylinders?"

"Shocking." He laughed hollowly. "But if you think *any* of those cylinders are clean—"

"I'll be seeing you," said Gil, polka-dotted spots dancing in front of his eyes. He picked up his tool kit and got out of there, with the office manager yelling pleadingly after him.

Gil very deliberately went back to the office.

"Well, look who's back!" a voice sneered. "I'll bet you laughed yourself sick! What d'you think of the proposition now? Regards."

Gil sat down with his hands limply between his knees. He looked at the little god, sitting on the edge of a stack of business psychology books.

"You could use a sense of humor," he said. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. When do you want the other god?"

"Say, that's the spirit!" The god jumped down, came to the edge of the desk. "How about tomorrow? Could you get him done by that time?"

"Why not?" said Gil wearily. "Altogether, you didn't take twenty-four hours. I'll just keep at it."

"Fine, fine. Now you're showing some sense." The little god rubbed his tiny hands happily. "In the meantime, I'll get to work and take the spell off

those machines. And I hope you don't mind if I ruin a couple of Vocaphones. We have to get started at that sometime, and it might as well be now. Then you can sell some nice, shiny rebuilt Talkaleks. Hoping you are the same, I remain, sincerely yours."

He leaped across to the dictating machine. The cylinder started mysteriously to whir. The little god ran like mad. In a few seconds he disappeared.

Gil went to work, hauling down a carton of a hundred cylinders which the Morgan Clothing Manufacturers Co. had sent in to be shaved. These cylinders could be shaved sixty times, and each time would take another voice recording.

At ten p. m. he had shaved them all. He gathered the shavings into an old kettle, set the kettle on his gas burner. The shavings, containing, presumably, the voice as well as the life force of still another god, boiled down to wax. Gil poured the wax in a cylindrical box. He waited until the mass hardened, then cut the box away.

He started to work with the same tools he had used before—a chisel, a tack hammer, a penknife.

At two a. m. the cylinder on the dictating machine whirled and the little god popped out.

He watched Gil for a while.

Then he began walking up and down the edge of the desk. He looked uneasy.

"I can't understand it," he muttered. "There's a disturbing influence in this room. As if there were somebody around who shouldn't be. Something unnatural."

"You," said Gil, chipping away at the mass of shavings.

"I don't mean that," the god said. "I'm not unnatural. I'm one of the most natural things that ever happened, if you look at it right. It's something else. I can't stand this! It grates on me. You go ahead and finish up that friend of mine. I'll be back tomorrow when you come back from lunch. There's just something in this room that isn't sympathetic with me. Hastily yours."

"Me," said Gil, but the god never heard him. He was gone—hastily.

GIL WORKED on, under the fire of artistic creation. He almost forgot his problems. Then, suddenly, something in his subconscious clicked. Why had the little god been so uneasy?

The answer was there. Morgan Clothing Manufacturers Co. They didn't use Talkaleks. They used rebuilt Vocaphones—*exclusively!*

Gil snapped his thin fingers so loud that the night watchman, passing outside the door, paused.

"Bit o' luck?" The night watchman secretly thought Gil was a dope.

"Luck?" Gil breathed. "You don't know the half of it. I'll make a god—and how!"

This sounded mad to the night watchman. He passed on.

The idea was so devastating that Gil's eyes brimmed with joy. Wait till the god of the Talkaleks got back. Wait till he saw the god that Gil had made. He would be frightened out of his wits. He was going to scream bloody murder. He would hop onto his rotating cylinder and hover trembling in whatever God-forsaken recess he had picked for himself. Gil would never see him again. Of course, he would have the second god to contend with. But, if Gil had anything to do with it, the second god was going to be nicer.

The first god he had given a scowl,

because he thought that gods naturally scowled. Well, the second god he would give a beatific smile. The second god would be a very beautiful god, with a *very* beautiful character.

Working with the fervor of this belief, he finished the second god at eight a. m. An exact replica of the other god, except that this one had a beautiful soul. Happily, he placed the god on the stack of papers on his desk. There he stood, one knee slightly bent, legs forked a little, one hand supporting the elbow of the other arm, whose hand, in turn, apparently supported his head.

Gil sank back to his swivel chair, braced his feet on the desk, admiring his creation. Slowly his eyes closed.

The sound of a whirring cylinder wakened him. His feet came down hard as he stood erect, rubbing his eyes.

The first god came out of the cylinder, running. He leaped across to the desk, with a flick of his singularly powerful legs.

He stood on the edge of the desk, looking at the second god.

"Good job," he conceded. "Yours."

The little god switched his eyes to Gil. Gil could see that his teeth were chattering. His body, too, was shaking, and a waxy sweat was running down his mottled hide.

"I f-feel funny," he confided to Gil. "Maybe you did something wrong. If you did, I'll destroy your business. I feel sick. I feel terrible. I don't understand it. A god shouldn't be afraid of anything, should he?" A pleading, scared look was in his eyes.

Gil kept his face sober, though he was wild with anticipation inside.

"Maybe if you knew exactly what was bothering you, you wouldn't be upset," he offered hopefully.

"That's it. That's it," the god chattered. "It's the unknown. It scares even gods. There's something in this room that hates me. Maybe it's that god?" he suggested, still shaking. His eyes fastened on the god. "If I knew it was him, I'd—"

He moved uncertainly toward the god.

Hesitatingly he grabbed it by the shoulder.

"You!" he said hoarsely, sweat still running down his hide.

He leaped back, chattering.

THE SECOND GOD came to life. The hue of animation came to its mottled hide. Awareness leaped into its eyes. Its lips curved upward into even a sweeter smile than Gil had given it. Its arms dropped, its head pivoted, caught the eyes of the first god, then passed on to Gil.

"I," proclaimed the second god, "am the god of all dictating machines made by the Vocaphone Co. Very truly yours."

He smiled angelically at Gil.

"YOU!"

The word was a scream; and the scream had been torn out of the throat of the first god.

His face was contorted. He had fallen into a crouch, one quivering hand of hate pointed at the god of all Vocaphones.

"YOU!" he screamed. "It's you I was afraid of and didn't know it! I felt you! I sensed you! Damn you, Gil Lassiter, you'll pay for this! Truly!"

He turned and leaped backward, landing on Gil's typewriter keyboard. He struggled wildly to retain his balance. He toppled to the floor, landing on cat feet. He looked up, his face murderous with rage. He raised his tiny fist and shook it madly. His dia-

bolical burning eyes fastened on Gil's.

"You knew you were doing this!" he shrilled. "You knew you were creating the one thing I can't stand to have in the same world with me. I told you to create another god like me. A Talkalek god, that I would be the master of because of my priority rights. You did the worst thing possible, both for me and yourself.

"I was created from the shavings of Talkalek transcribed cylinders.

"That"—his black lips curled vengefully—"was created from Vocaphone shavings! This means war, with *you* in the middle!"

The second god smiled charmingly.

"And not only war," he said complacently, "but it also means that neither of us can rest until the other is—destroyed." His eyes were gravely on Gil's. Even sadly. "Dear Sir: You truly have made a mistake! Regretfully yours."

Gil's head was whirling.

He grasped at a straw. "You mean that each of you might destroy the other?" he said eagerly.

"Hardly that," the god of Vocaphones smiled sweetly. "It means merely that one of us will freeze into immobility as soon as the other destroys that one's motivating forces. Sincerely yours."

Gil felt a chill creep up his back.

"And those motivating forces?" he inquired shakily.

The first god, still crouched on the floor, snarled at him.

"My dear Mr. Lassiter: You'll know soon enough! Me, I'm making tracks right now, to save my hide and freeze *his!* Disrespectfully yours."

He leaped off the floor onto the dictating-machine cylinder. He glared at Gil.

"P. S. You dirty dog," he added.

The cylinder whirled. Gil watched in fascination as the god of the Talkaleks disappeared.

GIL'S hands began to shake. "Where's he going?" he whispered at the remaining god.

The god's eyes were fixed on the Vocaphone over which a spell had apparently been cast. "He's going out to destroy my motivating forces. That is, the rebuilt Vocaphones which your company services. The minute he gets them stopped, I stop, too. Ah! That's a Vocaphone there, isn't it!"

He leaped from the desk to the dictating machine, stood on the cylinder. He got down on his knees, looking into the workings.

Gil chattered: "Now where're *you* going?"

The god didn't hear him. "Ah," he said satisfiedly. "That sinful god has cast an elementary spell over this machine. Most fortunate."

He got gracefully to his feet.

The cylinder began to whirl; the tiny god's legs pumped. He started to melt away.

"Where're *you* going?" Gil screamed.

"I," proclaimed the god of Vocaphones, "am going to put spells on all the Talkaleks you service. That will be the end of a wicked god."

"But why? You'll ruin me!"

The god smiled angelically. "That," he asserted, "is incidental. There can never be peace between Talkalek and Vocaphone! I remain, regretfully yours."

He melted away.

Gil covered his face with his hands and hastily sat down, trying to catch up with his stomach. But it seemed to be falling into an emptiness from which

there was no return. He let out a heartfelt groan.

He saw the whole thing now. Each god had been made from the shavings of Vocaphone and Talkalek transcribed cylinders respectively. Each god, therefore, in some peculiar way, got his motivating energy from the dictating machines that their creator serviced. Every dictating machine that was in any way connected with The Rebuilt Dictating Machine & Servicing Co. would, therefore, be eligible for a spell. If all the Vocaphone machines were rendered inoperative, the Vocaphone god would freeze into lifelessness, just a clever statue. And vice versa.

Gil groaned again, and very hurriedly put on his hat and coat and went out to what he was going to call lunch—though this had none of the joys usually associated with lunch hour.

After two hours, Gil came back. With shaking fingers and haggard face, he opened the door to his office. He took ten minutes to take off his hat and coat, light the light, and straighten up his desk—all the time keeping his eyes away from the phone.

But he couldn't keep his head buried in the sand forever.

"I'll say there've been calls for you!" the switchboard operator answered his query. She was apparently awestruck. Gil shuddered. "Call 'em off," he said hoarsely.

The operator began: "Johnson & Johnson, Wholesalers; John Fritz & Co.; American Valve; Williamson Machine Tool Co.; Seabright Northwestern Insurance Co.; J. H. Knight Manufac—"

"Stop," screeched Gil.

The operator stopped.

"Go on," said Gil, blue specks appearing before his eyes.

He hung up after a while, with a list of sixteen companies, all of whom had wanted service on the double quick, and they didn't mean maybe.

On the elevator, the operator looked at him with concern.

"You don't look so well today, Mr. Lassiter," he said solicitously. "Bad stomach?"

Gil turned on him. "Gods!" he snarled.

After he got in his coupé and started down the boulevard, he laughed crazily to himself.

"I don't look well," he cackled. "He's got the nerve to tell me I don't look well!"

He shifted gears madly.

He stopped off at Seabright Northwestern first, because, he remembered, they were using Talkalek and Vocaphone both.

The president's secretary, a buxom, competent-looking woman with a frosty gleam in her eye, answered his question.

"I don't know a Talkalek from a Vocaphone. All I know is that about half our dictating machines just won't work." She transfixed him with her frosty eyes. "And just why so many should get out of order at the same time, I'm sure I don't know. Unless, of course, you have ways of setting them so they don't run perfectly too long."

She bared her false teeth at him in a ghastly grin—to show him she was indulging in a byplay—but deep in her eyes there was a cunning look.

Gil looked at her aghast. Accusing him of dishonesty when that was the one thing he had always tried to stay away from!

He groaned. Damn those little gods. *Damn* them!

He turned away from the lady with the frosty gleam in her eye and bent over the machine nearest him. It was a Talkalek. Examination showed it to be in perfect order. Except that it wouldn't work.

Subsequently he discovered that was true of every one of the nine Talkaleks in the office. The Vocaphones were different. They were in working order, and they worked. Gil felt some of the tension wearing away from him. This left him some ground to stand on!

"The Vocaphones work," he told the lady with the frosty gleam in her eye.

"But the Talkaleks don't," she reminded him sweetly.

Gil's face fell. He turned away to the nearest Vocaphone, touching it here and there vaguely.

Suddenly, with no outside agency working, the cylinder on the machine began to spin. A little god grew out of the cylinder about halfway. He saw Gil. His mean little face snickered.

"Yah!" he jeered. "Maybe you'll learn your lesson." He raised his hand, made a series of mystic passes. Then he waved it in farewell to Gil.

"I'm off," he stated. "Got work to do. That Vocaphone god is too much of a fast worker for me to dawdle around. I remain, yours truly."

He started to fade away.

"Wait a minute," Gil screeched. He clasped his hands. "Please, please, fix my Talkaleks before you go."

The god's faint voice said: "Can't do it. I'm rushed. Sincerely."

He was gone. The cylinder lost its motion. Gil leaped forward, grabbed up the voice tube, pressed the cylinder control.

The cylinder wouldn't turn.

Gil whirled.

"Did you see it?" Gil panted, pointing at the cylinder. "The little god?"

The lady with the frosty gleam in her eye blinked, staring at Gil as if he were mad.

She said uncertainly: "Well, if you'll get those machines fixed in a hurry we'll appreciate it." As a parting shot, she added: "And don't make the price too high. I know you fellows have a habit of charging all the traffic will bear." Her ghastly teeth came into play again before she backed away.

For about fifteen minutes, Gil walked from machine to machine. Things were becoming more horrible by the second. Every machine in the office, Talkaleks and Vocaphones both, had simply *stopped*.

It was too much for Gil Lassiter. He knew he was going mad. He grabbed up his tool kit and made tracks out of there.

He went back to his office, where he sat huddled in abject misery.

The phone rang.

Gil recognized the voice of the president of Seabright Northwestern.

The president's voice roared at him.

"You walked out on us! The least you could have done was to stop in my office and perhaps explain what the trouble was. But you didn't. In the meantime, our business is paralyzed. There isn't one machine that will work."

"But—" Gil began frantically.

"The hell with you! If we can't get service from you, I know where we can."

Gil panted: "There isn't a man in the world who can fix those machines!"

"The hell you say!" roared the president of Seabright Northwestern. "Consider our contract canceled!"

The phone went *bang*.

It rang again.

"Rebuilt Dictating," Gil whispered faintly.

"This is Johnson & Johnson. We left a call for you some two hours ago. Our machines—"

Gil said, in a faraway voice: "Those machines can't be fixed, Mr. Rapte."

"What? Can't be fixed?" There was a pregnant silence. "Why not?"

"Because," said Gil, sweating.

"I know where we *can* get somebody to fix them," the voice insinuated. "Either the Talkalek or the Vocaphone Co. branches here in the city will be glad to get our business."

Gil, too broken up to go through with the same thing he had gone through at Seabright's, said weakly:

"If you could. I'm not feeling up to the minute today. Maybe tomorrow—"

The phone went *click*.

In the next hour it *banged* six times and *clicked* four times.

"The world goes smash," Gil said to himself. He wandered vaguely around the office, finally stopped at the open window. The wind blew into his face.

Spread out around him was the city, various signs standing out from store fronts or limned against the clear sky atop five and ten-story edifices.

The sign that eventually caught his eyes, and held them for some reason, was that of the Union Cheese Co.

"In Union There Is Strength." It was a good sign. It was a work of genius for catching the eye. *In union there is strength!*

Gil turned away, muttering that to himself. Something was clicking away down in his subconscious at a furious rate. He knew it. There was so much stuff in his mind about gods and dictating machines and Talkaleks and Vocaphones that pretty damned soon he was going to have a mental regurgitation!

It was worse than a stomach ache being relieved when it came.

The idea shook him to his very foundations.

"Got it!" he whispered. "Got it!"

The third god.

THE IDEA carried Gil Lassiter along the crest of its wave. It was so good he forgot about everything except that he'd like to see two gods roasting in hell.

He had two shavers in the office. Now he went down to his storeroom in the basement and brought up two more. He got down a carton of Vocaphone transcribed records that had come in three days before from the Mainville Chemical Works; and an equal number—fifty—that had been sent in for shaving from a chain-store branch office; but these fifty were Talkaleks.

With four shavers working at the same time, he had a hundred smooth cylinders by eight thirty. He mixed the shavings up well, melted them, poured the molten wax into a cylindrical cardboard box, waited for the mass to harden.

By nine thirty he was hard at work on the third god.

It was a stern and fearsome god that Gil created. A god whose face you could look at and tell he wasn't the foolin'-around kind. Here was a god who believed in laws, in discipline, who wouldn't stand for any funny stuff.

A hell of a powerful god!

Gil prayed as he sandpapered off the worst angles and gave the god a beauty that was wonderful. What a god! What a wonderful, wholesome god! At four p. m., he was completed. Gil ar-

ranged the papers on his desk and set the statue on them.

Then he sat back and stared at the god, waiting for it to come to life.

"Come on!" he breathed. "Come on! Live! Breathe!"

But the god just wouldn't live. He just stood there, with the stern, all-powerful look on his face, as if he disapproved of everything, and to hell with a puny mortal like Gil.

Gil began to plead. He began to pray. He did everything but get down on his knees.

Finally he slumped back, breathing hard, and his weariness seemed to rush on him in a cloud. He groaned. Everything was coming back to him. His business ruined, practically, and how the Vocaphone and Talkalek companies were going to like coming in to mop him up! He deliberately dropped his head back and closed his eyes. He slept.

When he awoke, sunshine was glaring into his eyes. He closed them tightly again. The events of the day before came surging out of his memory. He remembered the gods. Gods!

He struggled erect and opened his eyes unseeingly.

"Why, it just couldn't be!" he exclaimed in a shocked tone. "It just wasn't!"

"Come, come," said an irritable voice. "What couldn't be? What wasn't? Respectfully yours."

Gil's head swung around toward his desk.

He bounced to his feet.

"You're alive!" he croaked joyously. "Alive!"

"And who has a better right to live than the merger god of Talkalek and Vocaphone?"

"Nobody," Gil croaked. "Absolutely nobody!"

The merger god stood on the edge of the desk, his sharp black eyes running around the office. He looked as if he disapproved.

"A pigeon hole of a place," he commented. He caught Gil's eyes. "How's your business?" he demanded abruptly.

Gil stuttered: "R-rotten!"

"Hm-m-m. I thought as much. We'll put it on its feet. What's the trouble? Cordially."

Gil drew a deep breath. Here was a god who was a god. A god who waded right in.

He sat down.

He said slowly: "There's two other gods. Two of 'em. The god of the

Talkaleks. The god of Vocaphones."

The merger god's black hide seemed to turn into a mass of tense nerves and muscles. He came to the very edge of the desk; a low curse ripped from his black lips. "You sit there and tell me you had the audacity to create two other gods before you created *me?*"

"Well," said Gil, slightly scared.

The merger god's tiny voice thundered.

"Where are they?" he roared, shaking his fist. "Why haven't they reported to me before this?"

Without waiting for an answer, he flexed his legs, sailed across the room, landed on the dictating-machine cylinder the first god had used.

Gil came to his feet in alarm.

"But where're you going?"

"Sir:" roared the merger god, "I'm going out and drag 'em in by the ears. The audacity! The sheer, brazen nerve of those two gods. By this time they know I exist—yet they hide—from *me!*"

The cylinder began to whirl. The god's stanch legs moved like pistons. He started to fade.

"But wait a minute!" Gil yelled. "I wanted you to help me! There's a spell—"

"Regretfully yours," said the god, and disappeared.

GIL SLUMPED DOWN with a half laugh, half sob. Three gods, and not a damned one of them with a godly trait!

How long he sat there, balled up inside, he didn't know. Twice he answered the phone. Twice the phone went *bang*. Rebuilt Dictating—falling into ruins about him!

Then he noticed the cylinder beginning to whirl.

The god of the Talkaleks popped out, running, a frightened, abject expression on his face.

"He's got me!" he screeched. "There's hell to pay!"

He leaped across to the desk, hurled himself into the pile of papers and assumed the position Gil had created him in.

His lips moved once. "I'm just a paper weight," he stammered. "Hopefully yours."

The cylinder was still whirling. Out came the second god, a harried, disturbed expression on his waxy features.

"This is bad," he gasped. *"Bad.* Sincerely."

He jumped to the desk, clawed his way to the top of the stack of papers.

"Move over," he shrilled, his smile replaced by an abject grimace of fear. He kicked the first god in the shin. The first god moved over hurriedly, assuming his position again. The second god assumed the same position, and his beatific smile appeared and stayed. To look at him, one would think that that god had a beautiful character.

The third god, the merger god, appeared, running. He kept on running until the cylinder slowed down, and then stopped. He stood on the cylinder, hands on hips, sneering across at the two lesser gods.

"Well," he said to Lassiter at last, "they'll stay put, all right. As for you, you had your nerve creating those two gods before you created me. But who could expect anything from a human being? After all, we both exist for the good of the business. Rebuilt Dictating Machines & Servicing Co. must be put on its feet again."

"That's right," chattered Gil Lassiter. This was beyond his wildest expectations. "First of all you and I will visit the various companies that have can-

celed their contracts. I'll carry *you* in my tool kit and make them believe it's *me* that's fixing their machines."

The merger god drew his brows down in a puzzled frown. "Fix what machines?"

"Why"—Gil waved his arms excitedly—"the machines those two gods put their spells on!"

"Oh! I see." The merger god shrugged carelessly. He leaped across to the cylinder. "Those machines don't need fixing. I took the spells off before I came back here."

Gil reeled dizzily. He clutched his head between his hands. "But they'll claim the Vocaphone or Talkalek companies fixed their machines!" he wailed in horror. "Now I'll never get my contracts back. I'm ruined for good!"

The merger god smiled at Gil. Then he winked.

"My dear Lassiter:" he said, "I promise you you'll get them back. Everything I do hereafter will be for the good of Rebuilt Dictating Machines & Servicing Co."

Something in his tone chilled Gil Lassiter's blood.

"Where are you going now?" he said in a low, steady voice.

The god said carelessly: "Oh, I'm going to take a trip around to the various concerns the Vocaphone and Talkalek companies service. When they lose their contracts, our business is the only one open to do business with. Don't you worry, I'll put Rebuilt Dictating on its feet again."

The cylinder started to whirl. The merger god's legs pumped.

Gil Lassiter watched him, the slow, sickly juice of the final defeat of his Christian teachings seeping into his bones.

"That's dishonest," he whispered hollowly. "And I'm an honest man."

The god kept running, melting away.

"That," he said, "is a hell of a way to run a business," and disappeared. His head came back momentarily. He winked at Gil. "P. S. Next month we'll open up a branch office in Toledo."

THE END.

CARGO

by THEODORE STURGEON

The old tramp steamer was utterly disreputable and manned by a crew of wanted men. And somewhere off the coast of Europe she picked up the weirdest cargo on record!

Illustrated by Edd Cartier

I HEARD somebody say she was haunted. She wasn't haunted. There's another name for what ailed her, and I'll tell you about it if you like. I was aboard her when it started, and before. I knew every sheared rivet on her. I knew her when she was honest, a drab and prosaic member of our merchant marine. I saw what happened to her.

She was one of those broad-shouldered old hulks built by the dozen during War I. Her sisters lay rotting and rusting and waiting for a national emergency to prove their unseaworthiness. O. K. They make good shrapnel. Her name was *Dawnlight,* she was seven thousand tons, a black oil tanker, limped like a three-legged dog, and was as beautiful as a wart. She could do nine knots downhill with a fair wind and an impossible current. When she was loaded she steered well until the loss of weight from burned fuel in the after bunkers threw her down by the head, and then she proceeded as will any tanker with a loss back aft; when she was light she drew seventeen feet aft and nothing forward, so that when the wind blew abeam she spun on her tail like a canoe.

Yes, I knew her of old. She used to carry casing-head. That's airplane gas that makes explosive vapors at around 40° F. So one day a fireman found casing-head seeping through the seams of No. 9 tank into the fireroom and evaporating there. He fainted dead away, and the crew took to the boats during the night. The Old Man woke up at noon the next day screaming for his coffee, put two and two together, and with the help of two engineers and a messman, worked her into a cove in a small island off Cuba.

It so happened that a very wealthy gentleman was thereabouts, turned up with a nice offer, with the result that the Old Man and his three finks made for Havana in a lifeboat with their pockets full of large bills and the ship's log, which contained an entry describing her explosion and sinking. After that she carried crude oil for the wealthy gentleman to war zones. Great sport.

What made it such great sport was that not only did the *Dawnlight* have no business being afloat, but she had no business being in her particular business. Her nationality was determined by the contents of the flag locker, and her current log looked like a set of the Encyclopædia Britannica. They'd run up one flag or another, and pick a log to suit.

But she paid well and she fed well, and if you could keep away from the ocean floor and the concentration camps, you'd find her good shipping. If you must commit suicide, you might as well get rich doing it.

Across that patch of water was a line of footprints. Very queer footprints. Most of 'em weren't human.

I caught her in a certain drydock that makes a good thing out of doing quick work and asking few questions. Her skipper was a leathery old squarehead whose viscera must have been a little brown jug. Salt cracked off his joints when he moved. He was all man back aft and all devil on the bridge, and he owned our souls. Not that that was much of a possession. The crew matched the ship, and they were the crummiest, crustiest, hard-bitten bunch of has-been human beings ever to bless the land by going to sea. Had to be that way.

Any tanker is a five-hundred-foot stick of dynamite, even if she isn't an outlaw. If she's loaded, she'll burn forever and a week; and if she's light she'll go sky-high and never come down. All she needs is a spark from somewhere. That can happen easily enough any time; but imagine dodging subs and pocket battleships on both sides of the

martial fence—swift, deadly back-stabbers, carrying many and many a spark for our cargoes. We had nothing for protection but luck and the Old Man. We stuck by him.

The *Dawnlight* was the only ship I'd have taken, feeling the way I was. Once in a while the world gangs up on a guy, and he wants an out. The *Dawnlight* was mine—she'd pulled me through a couple of dark spots in the past—once when a certain dope fell and cracked his silly skull in a brawl over a girl, and I had to disappear for a while, and once when I married the girl and she took to blackmailing me for a living. Aside from all this, though, the *Dawnlight* was the only ship I *could* get aboard. I carried an ordinary seaman's certificate, indorsed for wiper. The department of commerce was very lenient with me and let me keep those ratings after I ran a naval auxiliary tanker on the rocks. Passed out drunk on watch. Anyhow, the Old Man gave me the eight-to-twelve watch as third mate, papers or no papers. It was that kind of a ship. He was that kind of a skipper. He had the idea I was that kind of a sailor.

We left the drydock (it's up North somewhere—that'll do!) and headed east and south. We were in ballast, carrying only two hundred big cases of farm machinery in the two dry cargo holds. Farm machinery with steel-jacketed noses and percussion caps. Nice chunky crates of tractors with rifled barrels. We followed the coastline pretty much, but stayed far off, out of the southbound steamer lanes. This wasn't long after the beginning of the war, when all hands ashore and afloat were excited about neutrality zones, so we wanted to keep our noses clean. However, we weren't too worried. We weren't the only gray-painted, unidentified hulk at sea by any means, and anyway, we had the skipper.

We dropped down to about 33° and headed due east. It was early fall—the hurricane season—but the weather was fine and mellow. We kept the morning sun a point off the starboard bow, and in the evening we tore up the base of the shadow we threw ahead. The black gang talked of an unheard-of sixty-three revolutions per minute from the engine, when she hadn't done better than fifty-seven in the last twelve years. Every time I shot the sun or a star on my watch, the ship stood still and waited for me to get it, and I navigated as if I had a radio beam in my pocket. It didn't seem like the old *Dawnlight* any more, with her rotten gear and her chewing-gum calking. It was a pleasure to work her. Even Cajun Joe's sea bread stopped giving me heartburn.

Yes, it was too good to be true, so in the long run it didn't turn out to be true. After we reached longitude 30° everything about that ship went haywire. Nothing was really wrong, only—well, there was the matter of the sextants, for instance. Four of them—mine, and the first's, and the second's, but worst of all, the Old Man's ancient binocular-type monster. They all went just a little bit off—enough to throw us eight or ten degrees off course. You see, after we passed 30, we changed course a shade north to head us up toward Gibraltar; and no sooner had we done that than clouds popped up from nowhere and the weather got really thick.

Nights we sailed in a black soup, and days we sailed in a white one, and the compass was the only thing that would

even admit where we might be. Things got screwy. The revolution counter said we were making a wabbly nine point two knots. The patent log claimed an even six. But it wasn't until the third day of fog, about five bells on my morning watch, that we really found out that we were being led astray. About the sextants, I mean.

There was a hole in the clouds, high on the starboard beam; I saw it coming up, figured it would show the sun, and whistled up the Old Man and the mate. I was right; it was a small hole, and as the three of us lined up on the wing of the bridge with our sextants, the second came bumbling sleepily up with his. Old Johnny Weiss was at the wheel, steadying the lubberline onto the compass card the way only an old shellback trained in sail can steer a ship.

"Watch the clock, Johnny," I said, and got the image of that cloud hole on my mirror.

"Hi," he said, which was the nearest any of us came to "Aye-aye, sir," on that scow.

We froze there, the four of us, each sextant steady as a rock, waiting for the gleam. It came, and the Old Man said "Hup!" and we fixed our arcs.

We got the time from Johnny—the old clock in the wheelhouse was chronometer enough for us—and we broke out our tables. Our four sights came out close enough. Position, 31° 17′ N, 33° 9′ 40″ W—which landed us about four hundred miles due east of the Madeiras. We found that if we split the difference between the distance-run given by the deck and engine logs, we'd reach that position by dead reckoning. It looked good—too good. The *Dawnlight* was balky steering, what with her outmoded hydraulic telemotor and her screw-type steering engine. She'd never performed that way.

As soon as I was alone in the chart house I went over my figures. Everything was jake, but—the primary mirror on my sextant was askew. Slipped down a bit in its frame. Why, a thing like that could prove us a hundred and fifty miles off course! It had never happened before—it was a new sextant, and I took care of it. Now how in—

I SLIPPED DOWN to the Old Man's office and went in. He and the mate were bent over the desk. They straightened as I came in.

"Cap'n, I—"

"Vot reading dit you get on your sun gun?" he asked me before I could finish my speech. I told him. He scratched his head and looked at the mate.

The mate said: "Yeah, me, too." He was a Boston Irishman named Toole; four foot eleven in his shoes. He was wanted for four very elaborate murders. He collected seventeenth-century miniatures. "I got the same thing, only my sextant's on the bum. That couldn't be right. Look—the eyepiece on the 'scope is off center."

"Look now here." The Old Man took down his behemoth and showed me a gradation plate sliding around loosely over its pulled rivets. "Yust py accident I gat the same."

"My gosh! That's what I came down to tell you, skipper. Look at this." I showed him the loose mirror on my instrument.

Just then Harry, the second mate, edged into the room. He always edged through doors on the mistaken assumption that he was thinner fore and aft than he was across the beam. It was

hard to tell. Harry saw everything and said nothing, and if he was as innocent as he hugely looked, he would not have been aboard the *Dawnlight*. He said:

"Cap, m' readin' on that sight was off. My sextant—"

"—hass gone gebrochen. Don't tell me dis, too."

"Why . . . yeh. Yeh."

"Four sextants go exactly the same amount off at the same time for four different reasons," said Toole, examining a bent arc track on Harry's sun gun. The captain sighed.

No one said anything for a minute, and we hardly noticed it when the captain's desk lamp winked off. The engine room speaking tube shrieked and I answered it because I was nearest. I heard:

"Skipper?"

"Third mate."

"Tell the Old Man that No. 2 generator just threw its armature. Cracked the casing all to hell."

"What's the matter with No. 1?"

"Damfino. Fused solid two hours ago. And no spares for anything, and no cable to wind a new armature."

"O. K." I turned and told the skipper.

He almost laughed. "I vas yust going to say dot ve'd haf to take a radio bearing on Gibraltar and Feisal. Heh. Didn't y'u tell me, 'Arry, dot dere vas no acid for the batteries on the radio?"

"I did."

"Heh." The skipper drummed for a moment on his desk, looking at me without seeing me. Then he saw me. "Vot de dirty hell are y'u duing down here ven y'u're on vatch? Gat up dere!"

I got—there were times when you couldn't play around with the old boy.

Up on deck the weather looked the same. The sea was slick and the air was warm, and I had to fumble around to locate the bridge ladder. Johnny was steering steadily, easily, a couple of spokes each way every couple of minutes. He was the only man aboard that had the feel of that crazy ship, with her warped keel and her scored and twisted propeller. He looked up at me as I stepped into the wheelhouse and grunted.

"What's up, Johnny?"

"Reckon you know where we are, huh?"

"I reckon."

No sense in getting the crew talking. Sailors gossip like a bridge club, and for the same reason—grouped people with the same basic interests. I've seen three quarters of a crew packed up and ready to leave because some wiseacre started the rumor that a ship was to be sold for scrap at the next port.

Johnny grunted, and I went into the chart room to monkey with that slipped glass in my sextant. The way the weather looked, I'd never have a chance to use it again, but then you can't tell about an African coastwise fog. What had made Johnny so quizzical? The more I tried to think of something else, the more that bothered me. About ten minutes later, working on the theory that the last word said before a long pause is the one that sticks, I went back into the wheelhouse and asked:

"Why do you want to know?"

"Oh, nothin'." He spat, and the tobacco juice rang a knell on the cuspidor. "Jest thinkin'."

"Come on—give."

"Waal—seems to me we been steerin' east b' nor'east about two days—right?"

"So?"

"Youse guys was so busy peekin'

through yer sextants at the Big Light that you didn't see it was in the wrong place."

"The sun? In the wrong place?"

"Yep. Steerin' east b' nor'east this time o' year, hereabouts, seems to me the sun'd show about broad on the bow at ten thirty in th' mornin'."

"Well?"

"So it shows up high an' dead abeam. Don't seem right, somehow."

He was right. I went and sat down on the pilot's stool. Radio dead, sextants haywire; all we have is the compass and good old Bowditch's dead-reckoning tables. And now—the compass?

"Johnny, are you sure you were on course when we took that sight?"

His silence was eloquent. Old Johnny Weiss could steer anything with a rudder unless it had a steering oar, and then he was better than most. If we had a radio, we could check the compass. We had no radio. If we could get a sun sight, we wouldn't need the radio. We couldn't get a sun sight. We were lost—lost as hell. We were steering a rock-steady compass course on a ship that was pounding the miles away under her counter as she had never done before, and she was heading bravely into nowhere.

An ordinary seaman popped in. "Lost the patent log, sir!"

Before I could say, "Oh, well, it didn't work, anyway," the engine-room tube piped up.

"Well?" I said into it, in the tone that means "Now what?"

It was the third engineer again. "Is the skipper up there?"

"No. What is it?"

"A lot of things happen," wailed the third. "Why do they all have to happen to *me?*"

"You don't know, shipmate, you don't know! What's up?"

"The rev-counter arm worked loose and fell into the crank pit. The I. P. piston grabbed it and hauled counter and all in. Goddlemighty, what goes on here? We jinxed?"

"Seems as though," I said, and whistled down the captain's tube to report the latest.

Everything depended on our getting a sun sight now. We might have calculated our speed at least from the revolution readings, a tide chart and prop-slip table. The admiralty charts don't give a damn about this particular section of sea water. Why should they? There's supposed to be a deep around the Madeiras somewhere, but then again there's flat sand aplenty off Africa. Even the skipper's luck wouldn't pull us out of this. I had a feeling. Damn it, we couldn't even hail a ship, if we met one. It would be bound to turn out a q-ship or a sub-chaser, tickled to death to pinch our cargo. Farm machinery. Phooey!

The saloon messman came up carrying clean sheets for the chart-room cot. I knew what that meant. The bridge was going to be the skipper's little home until we got out of this—if we did. I was dead beat. Things like this couldn't happen—they *couldn't!*

We had a council of war that night, right after I came on watch, the captain and I. Nothing had happened all day; the sun came out only once, on the twelve to four, and ducked in again so quickly that Harry couldn't get to his sextant. He did set the pelorus on it, but the ship rolled violently because of some freak current just as he sighted, and the altitude he got was all off. There'd been nothing else— Oh, yes;

we'd lost three heaving lines over the side, trying to gauge our speed with a chip. The darnest thing about it was that everything else was going as well as it possibly could.

The cook had found nine crates of really fancy canned goods in the linen locker—Lord knows how long they'd been there. It was just as if they'd been dropped out of nowhere. The engines ran without a hitch. The low-pressure cylinder lost its wheeze, and in the washrooms we got hot water when we wanted it instead of cold water or steam. Even the mattresses seemed softer. Only we just didn't know where we were.

The Old Man put his hand on my shoulder and startled me, coming up behind me in the darkness that way. I was standing out on the wing of the bridge.

"Vot's de matter; vorried about de veather?" he asked me. He was funny that way, keeping us on our toes with his furies and his—what was it?—kindnesses.

"Well, yes, cap'n. I don't like the looks of this."

He put his elbows on the coaming. "I tell y'u, boy, ve ain't got nodding to fret about."

"Oh, I guess not, but I don't go for this hide-'n'-go-seek business." I could feel him regarding me carefully out of the corners of his eyes.

"I vant to tell y'u something. If I said dis to de mate, or Harry, or vun of de black gang, dey vould say: 'I t'ink de ol' squarehead is suckin' vind. He must be gettin' old.' But I tell y'u."

I was flattered.

"Dis is a old ship but she is good. I am going to be sorry to turn her over to sumvun else."

"What are you talking about, skipper? You're not quitting when we get back?"

"No; before dat. Dass all I vorry about, y'u see. Dis vill be de first command I lost half a trip out. I vass master of thirty-two ships, but I alvays left dem in der home port. It von't be like dat now."

I was more than a little taken aback. I'd never seen the stringy old gun runner sentimental about his ship before. This was the first time I'd ever heard him mention it in printable terms. But what was all this about losing his command?

"What's the matter, cap'n—think we'll go to camp?" That was a *Dawnlight* idiom and meant being picked up by a warship of some kind.

"No, boy—nodding like dat. Dey can't touch us. Nobody can touch us now. Ah—hear dat?"

He pointed far out to port. The night was very still, with hardly a sound but the continual seethe of millions of bursting bubbles slithering past the ship's side. But far out in the fog was an insistent splashing—that heavy smacking splash that every seaman knows.

"Porpoise," I said.

The skipper tugged at my elbow and led me through the wheelhouse to the other wing. "Listen."

There it was again, on the starboard side. "Must be quite a few of 'em," I said laconically, a little annoyed that he should change the subject that way.

"Dere is plenty, but dey are not porpoises."

"Blackfish?"

"Dey is not fish, too. Dey is somet'ing y'u have seen in books. Dey is vimmin with tails on."

"What?"

"O. K., I vas kidding. Call me ven y'u are relieved."

In the green glow from the starboard running light I saw him hand me a piercing gaze; then he shambled back to the chart room. A little bit short of breath, I went into the wheelhouse and lit a cigarette.

The cuspidor rang out, and I waited for Johnny to speak.

"The skipper ain't nuts," he said casually.

"Somebody is," I returned. "You heard him, then."

"Listen—if the skipper told me the devil himself was firing on the twelve to four, then the devil it would be." Johnny was fiercely loyal under that armor of easy talk. "I've heard them 'porpoises' of yours for three days now. Porpoises don't follow a ship two hundred yards off. They'll jump the bow wave fer a few minutes an' then high-tail, or they'll cross yer bow an' play away. These is different. I've gone five degrees off to port an' then to starboard to see if I could draw 'em. Nope; they keep their distance." Johnny curled some shag under his lip.

"Aw, that's . . . that's screwy, Johnny."

He shrugged. "You've shipped with the Old Man before. He sees more than most of us." And that's all he'd say.

It was about two days later that we began to load. Yeah, that's what I said. We didn't dock, and we discharged our farm machinery and took on—whatever it was our cargo turned out to be. It was on the four to eight in the evening, when the white fog was just getting muddy in the dusk. I was dead asleep when the ship sat down on her tail, stuck her bow up and heeled over. The engines stopped, and I got up from the corner of my room where the impact had flung me.

She lay still on her side, and hell was breaking loose. Toole had apparently fallen up against the fire-alarm button, and the lookout forward was panicky and ringing a swing symphony on the bell. A broken steam line was roaring bloody murder, and so was the second mate. The whistle, at least, was quiet—it had fallen with a crash from the "Pat Finnegan" pipe.

I leaned against the wall and crouched into a pair of pants and staggered out on deck. I couldn't see a blasted thing. If the fog had been thick before, it was twenty times as thick now.

Someone ran into me, and we both went skittering into the scuppers. It was the mate on his way down to the captain's room. Why the Old Man wasn't on the bridge, I couldn't savvy, unless it had to do with that peculiar attitude of resignation about his imagined loss of command.

"What the hell," I wanted to know.

Toole said: "Who is that—third mate? Oh. I don't know. We've hit something. We're right up on top of it. Ain't rocks; didn't hear any plates go. Isn't sand; no sand bank this size could stay this far from land."

"Where's the skipper?"

"In his room, far as I know. C'mon, let's roll him out."

We groped our way to the alleyway door and into the midship house. Light was streaming from the skipper's room, and as we approached the door we heard his rare, drawn-out chuckle. I'll never forget the shock of seeing this best of captains, a man who had never dented a bilge plate in his life, sprawled back in his tilted swivel chair with his

feet on a tilted desk, chuckling into a really tilted bottle of Scotch.

Toole squawked: "Cap'n! We've struck something!"

The skipper giggled. He had a terrific load on. I leaned past Toole and shook him. "Skipper! We've struck!"

He looked at us blearily. "Heh. Sid-down, boyss, de trip iss over. Ve have not struck. Ve is yust finished. Heh!"

"Clear the boats," Toole said aside to me.

The skipper heard him. "Vait!" he said furiously, and lurched to his feet. "I am still in command here! Don't lower no boats. Ve are not in distress, y'u hear? Heh! Ve are loading. I know all about it. Go an' see for y'urselfs, so y'u don't belief me!"

Toole stared at the captain for a moment. I stood by. If Toole decided the Old Man was nuts, he'd take over. If not, then the squarehead was still running the show. Suddenly Toole leaned over and cut the master switch on the alarm system. It had a separate little battery circuit of its own, and was the only thing electrical aboard that still operated. The silence was deafening as the alarm bells throughout the ship stilled, and we could hear a bumble of voices from back aft as the crew milled about. They were a steady bunch; there would be no panic. Toole beckoned me out of the room and left. Once we were outside he said:

"What do you think?"

"I think he's— I dunno, Toole. He's a seaman first and a human being afterward. If he says we're not in distress it's likely true. Course, he's drunk."

Toole snorted. "He thinks better when he's drunk. Come on, let's look around."

We dropped down the ladder. The ship lay still. She was careened, probably with her starboard side under water and the starboard rail awash.

Toole said: "Let's go to port. Maybe we can see what it is we've hit."

We had to go on all fours to get up there, so steeply was the deck canted. It did us no good; there was nothing to be seen anywhere but fog.

Toole clung with one arm to the chain rail and puffed, "Can't see a thing down there, can you?"

I hung over the edge. "Can't even see the water line."

"Let's go down to the starboard side. She must be awash there."

She was. I stepped ankle-deep into sea water before I knew where I was. The sea was dead calm, and the fog was a solid thing; and something was holding the ship heeled over. I tell you, it was a nasty feeling. If only we knew what was under us! And then—we saw the ship being loaded.

MAY I never see another sight like that one. As if to tease and torture us, the fog swirled silently away from the ship's side, leaving a little dim island of visibility for us to peer into. We could see fifty or sixty feet of deck, and the chain rails fore and aft dipping into the sea at our feet; and we could see a round patch of still water with its edges wetting the curtain of fog. And on that patch of water were footprints. We both saw them at the same time and froze, speechless. Coming toward us over the water they were—dozens of them. The water was like a resilient, glossy sheet of paving, and the impression of dozens—hundreds—of feet ran across it to the ship. But there was nothing making the footprints. Just—footprints. Oh, my God!

There were big splay ones and big

slow ones, and little swift ones and plodding ones. Once something long and invisible crept with many legs up to the ship, and once little pointed feet, high-arched, tripped soundlessly over the chains and *something* fell sprawling a yard from where we stood. There was no splash, but just the indentation in the water of a tiny, perfect body that rolled and squirmed back onto its feet and ran over to the deck and disappeared. I suddenly felt that I was in the midst of a milling crowd of—of people. Nothing touched me, and yet, all around me was the pressure of scores of beings who jostled each other and pushed and shoved, in their eagerness to get aboard. It was ghastly. There was no menace in it, nor anything to fear except that here was a thing that could not be understood.

The fog closed down suddenly, and for a long moment we stood there, feeling the pressure of that mob of "passengers"; and then I reached out and found the mate's arm and tugged him toward the midship house. We crawled up the canted ladder and stood by the glow from the lamp in the captain's room.

"It's a lot of silly nonsense," I said weakly.

"Hm-m-m."

I didn't know whether or not Toole agreed with me.

The skipper's voice came loosely from the porthole. "Heh! I cert'n'y t'ank y'u for de Scotch, I du. Vat a deal, vat a deal!" And he burst out into a horrible sound that might have been singing and might have been laughter, in his cracked and grating voice. I stared in. He was nodding and grinning at the forward bulkhead, toasting it with a pony of fire water. He was quite alone.

"He's seein' things," said the mate abruptly.

"Maybe all the rest of us are blind," I said; and the mate's dazed expression made me wonder, too, why I had said that. Without another word he went above to take over the bridge, while I went aft to quiet the crew.

WE LAY THERE for fourteen hours, and all the while that invisible invasion continued. There was nothing any of us could do. And crazy things began happening. Any one of them might have happened to any of us once in a while, but—well, judge for yourself, now.

When I came on watch that night there was nothing to do but stand by, since we were hove to, and I set Johnny to polishing brass. He got his polish and his rag and got to work. I mooned at the fog from the wheelhouse window, and in about ten minutes I heard Johnny cuss and throw rag and can over the side.

"What gives, Johnny?"

"Ain't no use doin' this job. Must be the fog." He pointed to the binnacle cover. "The tarnish smells the polish and fades off all around me rag. On'y where I rub it comes in stronger."

It was true. All the places he had rubbed were black-green, and around those spots the battered brass gleamed brilliantly! I told John to go have himself a cup of coffee and settled down on the stool to smoke.

No cigarettes in the right pocket of my dungarees. None in the left. I *knew* I'd put a pack there. "Damn!" I muttered. Now where the—what was I looking for? Cigarettes? But I had a pack of cigarettes in my hand! Was I getting old or something? I tried to shrug it off. I must have had them

there all the time, only—well, things like that don't happen to me! I'm not absent-minded! I pulled out a smoke and stuck it in my chops, fumbling for a match. Now where— I did some more cussing. No matches. What good is a fag to a guy without a— I gagged suddenly on too much smoke. Why was I looking for a match? My cigarette was lit!

When a sailor starts to get the jitters he usually begins to think about the girl he left behind him. It was just my luck to be tied up with one I didn't want to think about. I simply went into a daze while I finished that haunted cigarette. After a while Johnny came back carrying a cup of coffee for me.

Now I like my coffee black. Wet a spoon in it and dip it in the sugar barrel, and that's enough sugar for me. Johnny handed me the cup, and I took the saucer off the rim. The coffee was creamed—on a ship that means evaporated milk—and sweet as a soft caramel.

"Damn it, Johnny, you know how I like my coffee. What's the idea of this?"

"What?"

I showed him. When he saw the pale liquid he recoiled as if there had been a snake curled up on the saucer instead of a cup. "S'help me, third, I didn't put a drop of milk in that cup! Nor sugar, neither!"

I growled and threw cup and saucer over the side. I couldn't say anything to Johnny. I *knew* he was telling the truth. Oh, well, maybe there happened to be some milk and sugar in the cup he used and he didn't notice it. It was a weak sort of excuse, but I clung to it.

At six bells the second heaved himself up the ladder. "O. K.—you're relieved," he said.

"At eleven o'clock? What's the idea?"

"Aw—" His huge bulk pulsed as he panted, and he was sweating. "I couldn't sleep, that's all. Shove off."

"I'll be damned! First time I ever heard of you rolling out before you were called, Harry. What's the matter—this canting too much for you?" The ship still lay over at about 47°.

"Naw. I c'n sleep through twice that. It was— Oh, go below, third."

"O. K. Course 'n' speed the same—zero-zero. The wind is on the weather side, an' we're runnin' between the anchors. The bow is dead ahead and the smokestack is aft. The temperature—"

"Dry up, will ya?"

"The temperature is mighty hot around the second mate. What's eatin' you, Harry?"

"I'll tell you," he said suddenly, very softly, so Johnny couldn't hear. "It was my bunk. It was full of spikes. I could feel 'em, but I couldn't see 'em. I've got the blue willies, third." He mopped his expansive face.

I slapped him on the back and went aft laughing. I was sorry I had laughed. When I turned in to my bunk it was full of cold, wet worms that crept and crawled and sent me mooning and shuddering to the deck, to roll up in the carpet for some shut-eye. No, I couldn't see them.

We left there—wherever "there" was—about fourteen hours after we struck. What it was that had stopped the ship we never did find out. We took soundings all around and got nothing but deep water. Whatever it was that the ship was lying on was directly underneath the turn of the bilge, so that no sounding lead could strike it. After the first surprise of it we almost got

used to it—it and the fog, thick as banked snow, that covered everything. And all the while the "loading" went on. When it began, that invisible crowding centered around the section of the starboard well deck that was awash. But in a few hours it spread to every part of the ship. Everywhere you went you saw nothing and you actually felt nothing; and yet there was an increasing sense of being crowded—jostled.

It happened at breakfast, 7:20. The skipper was there, and the mate, though he should have been on the bridge. Harry rolled in, too, three hundred pounds of fretful wanness. I gathered that there were still spikes in his bunk. Being second mate, his watch was the twelve to four, and breakfast was generally something he did without.

The captain lolled back in his chair, leaning against the canted deck and grinning. It made me sore. I refused the bottle he shoved at me and ordered my eggs from the messman.

"Na, don't be dat vay," said the skipper. "Everyt'ing is under control. Ve is all going to get a bonus, and nobody is going to get hurt."

"I don't savvy you, cap'n," I said brusquely. "Here we are high and dry in the middle of an African pea-souper, with everything aboard gone haywire, and you're tickled to death. If you know what's going on, you ought to tip us off."

The mate said. "He's got something there, captain. I want to put a boat over the side, at least, and have a look at what it is that's grounded us. I told you that last night, and you wouldn't let a boat leave the chocks. What's the idea—don't you want to know?"

The captain dipped a piece of sea bread into the remains of four eggs on his plate. "Look, boyss, didn't I pull y'u out of a lot of spots before dis? Did I ever let y'u down yet? Heh. Vell, I von't now."

The mate looked exasperated. "O. K., O. K., but this calls for a little more than seamanship, skipper."

"Not from y'u it don't," flared the captain. "I know vat goes on, but if I told y'u, y'u vouldn't believe it. Y'u'll make out all right."

I decided to take matters into my own hands. "Toole, he's got some silly idea that the ship is out of our hands. Told me the other night. He's seeing ghosts. He says we were surrounded by 'vimmin mit tails on.'"

The mate cocked an eyebrow at the Old Man. The captain lurched to his feet.

"Vell, it's true! An' I bat y'u y'ur trip's pay against mine dat I gat one for myself! Ve is taking on a cargo of—" He swallowed noisily and put his face so close to mine that our foreheads nearly touched. "Vare de hell y'u t'ink I got dis viskey?" he bellowed. "Somebody has chartered dis ship, and ve'll get paid. Vot y'u care who it is? Y'u never vorried before!" He stamped out.

Harry laughed hollowly, his four pale chins bobbing. "I guess that tells you off, third."

"I'll be damned," I said hotly. "I trust the Old Man as much as anyone, but I'm not going to take much more of this."

"Take it easy, man," soothed Harry. He reached for the canned milk. "A lot of this is fog and imagination. Until the skipper does something endangering crew, ship or cargo we've got no kick."

"What do you call staying in his room when the ship rams something?"

I suppose if the captain wanted to keep a mermaid in his room there was no reason he shouldn't.

"He seems to know it's all right. Let it go, mate. We're O. K., so far. When the fog clears, everything will be jake. You're letting your imagination run away with you." He stared at Toole and upended the milk can over his cup.

Ink came out.

I clutched the edge of the slanting table and looked away and back again. It was true enough—black ink out of a milk can I'd seen the messman open three minutes before. I didn't say anything because I couldn't. Neither Toole nor Harry noticed it. Harry put the can on the table and it slid down toward Toole.

"All right," said Toole, "we'll keep our traps shut until the skipper pulls something really phony. But I happen to know we have a cargo consigned to a Mediterranean port; and when and if we get off this sandbank, or whatever it is, I'm going to see to it that it's delivered. A charter is a charter." He

picked up the can and poured.

Blood came out.

It drove me absolutely screwball. He wouldn't watch what he was doing! Harry was working on a pile of scrambled eggs, and the mate was looking at me, and my stomach was missing beats. I muttered something and went up to the bridge. Every time there was some rational explanation developing, something like that had to happen. Know why I couldn't pipe up about what I had seen? Because after the ink and the blood hit their coffee it was cream! You don't go telling people that you're bats!

IT WAS ten minutes to eight, but as usual, Johnny Weiss was early. He was a darn good quartermaster—one of the best I ever sailed with. A very steady guy, but I didn't go for the blind trust he expressed in the skipper. That was all right to a certain extent, but now—

"Anything you want done?" he asked me.

"No, Johnny, stand by. Johnny—what would you do if the officers decided the captain was nuts and put him in irons?"

"I'd borry one of the Old Man's guns an' shoot the irons off him," said my quartermaster laconically. "An' then I'd stand over him an' take his orders."

Johnny was a keynoter in the crew. We were asking for real trouble if we tried anything. Ah, it was no use. All we could do was to wait for developments.

At eight bells on the button we floated again, and the lurch of it threw every man jack off his feet. With a splash and a muffled scraping, the *Dawnlight* settled deeply from under our feet, righted herself, rolled far over to the other side, and then gradually steadied. After I got up off my back I rang a "Stand-by" on the engine-room telegraph, whistled down the skipper's speaking tube, and motioned Johnny behind the wheel. He got up on the wheel mat as if we were leaving the dock in a seaport. Not a quiver! Old Johnny was one in a million.

I answered the engine room. "All steamed up and ready to go down here!" said the third engineer's voice. "And I think we'll have that generator running in another twenty minutes!"

"Good stuff!" I said, and whistled for the skipper. He must have felt that mighty lurch. I couldn't imagine why he wasn't on the bridge.

He answered sleepily: "Vell?"

"We're afloat!" I spluttered.

"So?"

"What you want to do—lay here? Or are we going some place?"

There was silence for a long time—so long that I called and asked him if he was still on the other end of the tube.

"I vas getting my orders," he said. "Yes, ve go. Full speed ahead."

"What course?"

"How should I know? I'm through now, third. Y'u'll get y'ur orders."

"From Toole?"

"No!"

"Hey, if you ain't captain, who is?"

"I vouldn't know about dat. Full speed ahead!" The plug on his end of the tube clicked into place, and I turned toward Johnny, uncertain what to do.

"He said full ahead, didn't he?" asked Johnny quietly.

"Yeah, but—"

"Aye, aye, sir," he said with just a trace of sarcasm, and pulled the handle of the telegraph over from "Stand-by" to "Full ahead."

I put out my hand, and then shrugged and stuck it in my pocket. I'd tell Toole about it when I came off watch. "As you go," I said, not looking at the compass.

"As she goes, sir," said Johnny, and began to steer as the shudder of the engines pounded through the ship.

THE MATE came up with Harry at noon, and we had a little confab. Toole was rubbing his hands and visibly expanding under the warmth of the bright sun, which had shone since three bells with a fierce brilliance, as if it wanted to make up for our three days of fog. "How's she go?" he asked me.

"Due west," I said meaningly.

"What? And we have a cargo for the Mediterranean?"

"I only work here," I said. "Skipper's orders."

Harry shrugged. "Then west it is, that's all I say," he grunted.

"Do you want to get paid this trip?" snapped Toole. He picked up the slip on which I had written the ship's position, which I'd worked out as soon as I could after the sun came out. "We're due south of the Madeiras and heading home," he went on. "How do you think those arms shippers are going to like our returning with their cargo? This is the payoff."

Harry tried to catch his arm, but he twisted away and strode into the wheelhouse. The twelve-to-four quartermaster hadn't relieved Johnny Weiss yet.

"Change course," barked the mate, his small, chunky body trembling. "East-nor'east!"

Johnny looked him over coolly and spat. "Cap'n changes course, mate."

"Then change course!" Toole roared. "The squarehead's nuts. From now on I'm running this ship!"

"I ain't been told of it," said Johnny quietly, and steadied on his westerly course."

"Well, by God, I'm the mate!" Toole said. "You've had no orders from that lunatic to disregard a command of a superior officer. Steer east!"

Weiss gazed out of the wheelhouse window, taking his time about thinking it over. The mate had made his point; to refuse further would be rank insubordination. Though Johnny was strong in his loyalty to the skipper, he was too much of a seaman to be pigheaded about this until he knew a little better where he stood.

"East it is, sir," he said, and his eyes were baleful. He hauled at the wheel, and a hint of a grin cracked his leathery face. "She—won't answer, sir!"

I saw red. "Go below!" I growled, and butted him from behind the wheel with my shoulder. He laughed aloud and went out.

I grasped the two top spokes, hunched my shoulders and gave a mighty heave. There was suddenly no resistance at all on the wheel, and my own violence threw me heels over crupper into the second mate, and we spun and tumbled, all his mass of lard on top of me. It was like lying under an anchor. The wind was knocked out of him, and he couldn't move. I was smothering, and the mate was too surprised to do anything but stare. When Harry finally rolled off me it was a good two minutes before I could move.

"Damn that quartermaster," I gasped when we were on our feet again.

"Wasn't his fault," wheezed Harry. "He really tried to spin the wheel."

Knowing Johnny, I had to agree. He'd never pull anything like that. I scratched my head and turned to the mate. He was steering now, appar-

ently without any trouble at all. "Don't tell me you can turn the ship?"

He grinned. "All it needed was a real helmsman," he ribbed me. And then the engines stopped, and the telegraph rang and spun over to "Stop," and the engine-room tube squealed.

"Now what?"

"I dunno," came the third's plaintive voice. "She just quit on us."

"O. K.; let us know when you've shot the trouble." The engineer rang off.

"Now what the hell?" said the mate.

I shrugged. "This is a jinxed trip," I said. I verified the "Stop" signal on the telegraph.

Harry said: "I don't know what's got into you guys. The skipper said somethin' about a new charter. He don't have to tell us who gave it to us."

"He don't have to keep us in the dark, either," said Toole. Then, glancing at the compass, he said. "Looka that! She's swingin' back to west!"

I looked over his shoulder. Slowly the ship was turning in the gentle swell, back to due west. And just as she came to 270° on the card—the engines began to pound.

"Ah!" said the mate, and verified the "Full ahead" gong that had just rung.

The third whistled up again and reported that he was picking fluff off his oilskins. "I'm going on the wagon," he said. "She quits by herself and starts by herself, an' I'm gonna bust out cryin' if it keeps up!"

And that's how we found out that the ship, with this strange cargo, insisted on having her head. For every time we tried to change course, the engines would stop, or a rudder cable would break, or the steering engine would quit. What could we do? We stood our watches and ran our ship as if nothing were the matter. If we hadn't, we'd have gone as mad as we thought we already were.

Harry noticed a strange thing one afternoon. He told me about it when we came off watch.

"Y'know that box o' books in the chart room?" he asked me.

I did. It was an American Merchant Marine Library Association book chest, left aboard from the time the ship was honest. I'd been pretty well all through it. There were a few textbooks on French and Spanish, half a dozen detective novels, a pile of ten-year-old magazines, and a miscellaneous collection of pamphlets and unclassifiable.

"Well, about three o'clock I hear a noise in the chart room," said Harry, "an' I have a look. Well, sir, them books is heaving 'emselves up out of the chest and spilling on th' deck. Most of 'em was just tossed around, but a few was stackin' in a neat heap near the bulkhead. I on'y saw it for a second, and then it stopped, like I'd caught someone at the job, but I couldn't see no one there." He stopped and licked his lips and wheezed. "I looks at that pile o' books, an' they was all to do with North America an' the United States. A coupla history books, an atlas, a guidebook to New York City, a book on th' national parks—all sech. Well, I goes back into the wheelhouse, an' a few minutes later I peeks in again. All them books on America was open in different places in the chart room, an' the pages was turnin' like someone was readin' them, only—there just wasn't nobody there!"

What the *hell* was it that we had aboard, that wanted to know about the United States, that had replaced our captain with a string of coincidence,

that had "chartered" the ship? I'd had enough. I firmly swore that if I ever got back to the States, police or no, I'd get off this scow and stay off her. A man can stand just so much.

ABOUT three days out the torpedo boat picked us up. She was a raider, small and gray and fast and wicked, and she belonged to a nation that likes to sink arms runners. One of the nations, I mean. I had just come off watch, and was leaning on the taffrail when I saw her boiling along behind us, overtaking.

I ran forward, collaring an ordinary seaman. "Run up some colors," I said, "I don't give a damn what ones. Hurry!"

Pounding up the ladder, I hauled Toole out of the wheelhouse, pointed out the raider and dived for the radio shack, which was some good to us now that the generator was going again.

I sat down at the key and put on a headset. Sure enough, in a second or two I heard the order: "What ship is that? Where from? Where bound?" repeated in English, French, German and Spanish. I'd have called the skipper, but had given him up as a bad job. Toole came in.

"They want to know who we are," I said excitedly. "Who are we?"

"Wait'll I look at the flag the kid is running up," he said. He went to the door, and I heard him swear and whistle. "Give a look," he said.

Flying from the masthead was a brilliant green flag on which was a unicorn, rampant. I'd seen it—where was it? Years ago—oh, yes; that was it! In a book of English folk tales; that was supposed to be the standard of Oberon and Titania, King and Queen of . . . of the fairies, the Little Folk!

Dazed, I turned to the key and began pounding. I didn't even realize what I was sending. Some imp controlled my hand, and not until it was sent did I realize I had said, *"S. S. Princess of Birmingham,* Liverpool, bound for Calais with a load of airplane parts!"

"Thank you!" said the raider, and put a shell across our bow. Toole had gone back to the bridge, and I sat there sweating and wondering what the hell to do about this. Of all stupid things to say to an enemy raider!

The engine vibration suddenly became labored and the ship slowed perceptibly. Oh, of course, the old wagon would pick a time like this to become temperamental! I beat my skull with my fists and groaned. This was curtains.

The raider was abeam and angling toward us. "Heave to!" she kept buzzing through my phones. Through the porthole beside me I could already see the men moving about on her narrow decks. I turned to my key again and sent the commander of the raider some advice on a highly original way to amuse himself. In answer he brought his four swivel guns to bear on us.

The bridge tube whistled. Toole said: "What the hell did you say to him? He's fixin' to sink us!"

"I don't know," I wailed. "I don't know nothing!"

I ripped off the headset and put my elbows on the port ring across the room, staring out to sea with my back to the swiftly approaching raider. And there in the sunny waves was a conning tower, periscope and all!

Now get this. Here we were, lying helpless, going dead slow with crippled engines between a surface raider and a sub. We were meat for anyone working for any government. Most of us were Americans; if the raider took us

it would mean an international incident at a time when no one could afford one. If the sub took us, it was a concentration camp for us. Either might, and probably would, sink us. We were outlaws.

I went up on the bridge. No sense doing anything now. If we got into boats, we'd likely be cut down by machine-gun bullets. Toole was frantically tugging at the handle of the engine-room telegraph.

"I'm trying to stop her!" he gasped. "She's going dead slow; there's something wrong with the engines. They're making such a racket back there that the first assistant can't hear the tube whistle. The telegraph is jammed! The helm won't answer! Oh, my God!"

"Where's your quartermaster?"

Toole jerked a thumb toward the bridge ladder. "I sent him aft to run down to the engine room, and he tripped and fell down to the boat deck! Knocked himself out!"

I ran to the port wing and looked out at the sub. True to her kind, she was attacking without asking questions. There was a jet of spume, and the swift wake of a torpedo cut toward us. At the rate we were going, it would strike us just between the after dry-cargo hold —where the "farm machinery" was stowed—and the fire room. It would get both the explosives and the boiler—good night nurse!

And then our "coincidental commander" took a hand. The crippled, laboring engines suddenly raced, shuddered and took hold. Grumbling in every plate, the *Dawnlight* sat down on her counter, raised her blunt nose eight feet, and scuttled forward at a speed that her builders would have denied. In fifty seconds she was doing fourteen knots. The torpedo swept close under our stern, and the raging wash of the tanker deflected it, so that it hurtled—straight toward the raider!

It struck just aft the stem piece, blowing away the gunboat's bow and turning her on her beam ends. She righted slowly, lying far down by the head, and lay helpless. The sub, seeing her for the first time, came to the surface, and men tumbled out of the hatches to man her four-incher. She began blasting away at the torpedo boat as fast as she could load, and the raider answered her, two shots to the sub's one. And there we left them, and for all I know they are blasting away yet, far too busy to pay attention to a crummy old tankship. And Toole and

I—well, we cried on each other's shoulders for twenty minutes, and then we laughed ourselves sick.

THE NEXT four days were straight sailing, but for the pranks that were played on us. The skipper stuck to his cabin; we found out why later, and I can't really blame him. There was still no sign of the mob of beings that could be felt aboard, but for—again—the pranks that were played on us. We stood our watches and we ate our meals and we painted and chipped and scraped as usual. But for the—but I said that before.

Like the time the buff-colored paint the day gang was laying on the after bulkhead turned the steel transparent for forty-eight hours. Behind the bulkhead was the crew's washroom. The view from up forward was exquisite. As the four-to-eight fireman expressed it: "I wouldn't give a damn if the washroom was just fer washin'."

And then there were the voices. I got into a poker game in the crew's messroom one night, and the going was hot and heavy. There was about seven hundred dollars in the pot and a bluffer was really taking his future in his hands. I opened with a pair of jacks backed up, and Harry raised me fifty dollars on a ten-dollar bet. I folded up, and the chief engineer stayed, as did three of the crew. They went on that way until all had dropped out except Harry and the second cook. Toole was running around the table, kibitzing, chortling with joy every time one of them raised.

Finally the cooky checked, and in that tense moment before they showed what they had, Toole's voice came calm and clear: "Don't let him ride you, cook. He has a fourflush!"

You could have heard a feather flutter for a second; and then, while the cook, who had just raised his hand to throw in his cards and give the pot to Harry, showed three kings and swept in a twelve-hundred-dollar pot, Harry rose with a roar and turned over the table, the bench, and half the crew in a monumental dive on Toole. The big second mate really went to work on him; it took eight of us to pull him off and ask him what the hell. We'd all been watching Toole; we all swore he hadn't spoken. And he hadn't. Where that voice came from was just—well, one of the goofy things that happened that trip.

And lots of little things, like a spoonful of salt turning to thumbtacks in the Cajun's best gumbo soup, and live lobsters in the linen locker, and toadstools in the bos'n's stores, and beautiful green grass, an acre of it, with four concentric fairy rings, growing on a flaked hawser in the forward cargo hold; and then there were the dice that, in the middle of a crap game, developed wickedly humorous caricatures of the six ship's officers—including me. That might not seem like much to you; but when you remember how clever they were, and when you could never meet one of your crew without his bursting into fits of laughter when he saw your face—well, it wasn't the best thing in the world for discipline.

About the captain— We got curious, Toole and I, about how he was getting on. He had locked himself in his room, and every once in a while would whistle for more food. He ate fish almost exclusively, in enormous quantities. He never showed his face on deck, and his trays of eats were left outside his door and never touched until the messman and all others were well out of the alley-

way outside his room. Through the speaking tube to his room, to which we glued our ears at times, we could hear him having long conversations. There was another voice, but it was pitched just low enough so that it might have been his. His portholes were tightly curtained, although they were often open; and nothing could be heard through them except the mumble of his voice—or voices.

It got too much for Toole and me, and we decided to do something about it. Some minor pretext to get a peek into his room. He wouldn't come to the door if we knocked; the portholes were the answer. Now, how could we get the curtain off from the outside without the irascible old man's coming out with a gun in each hand? We finally hit on something ideal. We'd get a broken spar with a snaggy end from somewhere, carry it past his porthole, and "accidentally" stick it in, tearing off the curtain and giving us a good look.

I'm sorry we did. We'd no business looking into the Old Man's private life that way. After all, we decided when we batted the wind about it afterward, the Old Man had a right, if he wanted to, to have a . . . a mermaid in his room! We saw her without being seen, and the skipper must have been in the inner room. She was very lovely, and I got a flash of scales and golden hair, and felt like a heel for looking.

TOOLE AND I talked it over one afternoon as we neared the coast. The two of us had seen more of the whole screwy business than anyone else, and besides, Toole was an Irishman. No one will ever know if he was right or not, but his explanation is the only one that will fit all the facts. Pieced together from a two-hour conversation, this is about what he said, and now—I believe him:

"Third, this is a silly trip, hey? Ah, well. There are many things that you or I can't understand, and we're used to them, like the northern lights and the ways of a woman. I think that the skipper sold us out. No; no harm to us." He dragged on his cigar and stared out to sea as he talked. "Something, or somebody, made a deal with him the day after we sailed. Listen; hear that?"

Far out on the beam sounded the steady *smack-splash* of huge schools of porpoise. Oh, yes; they *might* have been porpoise.

"You told me what the skipper said to you about those critters. And they don't act like porpoises. I don't know if it was one of them or not; maybe it was something we couldn't see that talked. I think the skipper could. He's a squarehead, and they're seagoing people, and they know the sea from 'way back. He's been to sea half again as long as the oldest sailor aboard; you know that. I don't have to tell you that the sea is something that we'll never really understand. You can't know *all* about anything, even an atom; and the sea is so *damn* big.

"Well, he was made an offer; and it was probably a lifetime supply of whiskey and a week or so with that m-mermaid we—thought we saw in his room. What was the deal?

"That he should turn over his ship, and the crew to work it, to whatever party it was that wanted it for a trip from the African coast to America. There must have been provisions, if I know the skipper; he's a downy bird. He must have provided that the ship was to be protected against weather and

bullets, mines and torps. He must have stipulated that no one aboard was to be harmed permanently, and—I'm sure of it—that ship and cargo were to be returned to him at the end of the trip. Everything else I've guessed at has turned out, hasn't it? Why not that? The only thing that really bothers me is the loss of time, because time is really big money in this racket. But you can bet that the squarehead wasn't beaten down. We'll find out—I'm certain of it.

"Now, about the passengers. Laugh at me and I'll dry up like a clam; but I believe I have the answer. The old country has inhabitants that men have dreamed and sung and written and told about a great deal, and seen more than seldom. I've spent a lot of time off watch reading about 'em, and my mother used to tell me—bless her! Anyway, there was ghosts and pixies, goblins and brownies, and devishes and fairies and nymphs and peris and dryads and naiads and kelpies and sprites; gnomes and imps and elves and dwarves and nixies and ghouls and pigwidgeons, and the legion of the leprechauns, and many another. And some were good and some were not, and some helped and some hindered; but all were mischievous as hell. They weren't too bad, any more than are the snakes and spiders that eat mosquitoes, and many were downright beneficial.

"There's hell to pay in Europe now, third. You can't expect a self-respectin' pixie to hide in a shell hole and watch a baby being torn to shreds. They sickened of it, and their boss man, whoever he is, got 'em together and made arrangements to ship 'em some place where there's a little peace and quiet once in a while, where they can work their harmless spells on a nonaggressive populace. They can't swim worth a damn, and you couldn't expect the sea folk to ferry 'em over; they're an unreliable lot, anyway, to all accounts.

"I read a book once about Ol' Puck, and how the Little People were brought to the British Isles from the Continent. They couldn't swim even that, and they got a blind man to row and a deaf mute to stand lookout, and never a word was said of it until Puck himself told of it. This is the twentieth century, and it's a big ocean they've to cross, and there are many more of them. Did ye notice, by the way," he broke off suddenly, "that though our tanks are empty an' we've used fuel and water and stores for near two weeks, that we're *low in the water?*" He laughed. "We've many and many of 'em aboard.

"We'll unload 'em, and we'll get our pay for the job. But this I'll tell you, and now you may laugh, for you're in the same boat. We're r'arin', tearin' lawbreakers aboard here, third, and we don't give a damn, or we wouldn't be here. But if there's any kind of a good place for us to go at the end of the voyage, then we'll go there for this week's work. It was always a good thing to help out a war refugee."

I didn't laugh. I went away by myself and chewed and swallowed that, and I thought about it a bit, and now I believe what I believe, and maybe a little bit more. It's a big world, and these are crazy times.

WELL, almost as we expected, we unloaded, but it only took us three hours instead of fourteen. Yes, we struck fog off the Carolinas, and the ship nosed up and heeled over in it, and we could feel the pressure getting less aboard. And when the *thing* under the ship sank and floated us again, and the sun came out—

Well, this is the part that is hard to explain. I won't try it. But look: It was the twenty-third day of September when we sailed from the drydock. And when we lay off the coast that way, just out of the fog, it was the twenty-fifth. And it would have taken just three days for us to reach there from the drydock. Somewhere we lost a week. Yeah.

And the bunkers were full of fuel. And the lockers were full of stores. And the fresh-water tanks were full of water, just as they had been. But—there's a difference. Any fuel we use is—or acts like—high-grade stuff. And our food tastes better, and the work is easier. Yeah, we're lawbreakers—outlaws. But we take our ship where we please, when we please, and never a warship do we see, and never a shell or mine touches us. Oh, yeah; they say she was haunted. No; there's another word for it. She is—*enchanted*. We're paid, and we're being paid. And we'll go anywhere and do anything, because we have the best skipper a man ever sailed under, and because, more than any other men on earth, we need not be afraid of death.

But I can't forget that there'll be hell an' all to pay ashore!

THE END.

GOING—Going—Gone!

The back copies of Unknown are being cleaned out more rapidly than expected. Since October, 1939, a heavier supply of back numbers has been laid down, but May, June and July, 1939, are already completely gone. A few copies of the earlier issues are still available at 30c a copy. (The extra charge is to cover warehouse costs.) All copies less than one year old are available at the original price of 20c a copy. If you've forgotten the issue in which a particular story which you want appeared, ask for the issue by story name. Send requests to: Subscription Department, Street & Smith Publications, Inc., 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

CARTWRIGHT'S CAMERA

by NELSON S. BOND

● "Dopey" dropped the camera; thereafter it wouldn't take pictures of what was happening. It took pictures of what would happen!

Illustrated by Edd Cartier

ALL I've got to say is, if he should come around to your place looking for a job—streak, don't stroll, to the nearest air-raid shelter! Tell him you're fresh out of jobs. Tell him you're on relief yourself. Tell him any old thing

that pops into your mind—but as you value your sanity, and your Dun & Bradstreet rating, *don't* give him a job!

I'm not sure what his real name is. We called him Dopey, because he looked more like the Disney creation than the original. You'll know him by his mop of carrot-colored hair, by his loving-cup ears, and by the dizzy way he gawks up at you from under a pair of haystack eyebrows.

He may be limping a trifle, and I don't think he'll want to sit down. Anyway, don't ask him to. Tell you what! If he shows up, call me. Or better yet, call Johnny Cartwright at the *World-News* office. Johnny's broken hoof is O. K. now. I think he'd welcome an opportunity to shatter it again on Dopey's southern exposure.

But whatever you do—don't give him a job!

IT ALL started like this: The chief called Johnny and me into his den, scowled at us, and said, *"S. S. Victory* docks today. Pier 63. Gloria deLuys aboard. Get going!"

For once, neither of us had an alibi. This DeLuys babe is delish, and I don't mean could be. She had a fadeaway act with the flimsies that had the London nightclubbers gaga till Herr Hitler's European strip tease gave them more important things to think about; she also has a stand-in-one-spot "dance" that makes you believe Britannia *does* rule the waves. And waves. And waves.

Johnny went to his cubby. He yelled, "Get the lead out, Dopey. Gimme my 'Flex and the adapter. Three packs of Super-Plen."

Dopey fumbled around for a while and came out with the equipment. His eyes were as wide as an f.32 lens. "You going somewhere, Mr. Cartwright?" he gargled. "Can I go, too? Me, too, Mr. Cartwright, huh?"

Well, he was supposed to be Johnny's assistant. So Johnny said, "Come on!" and we went places and did things via the taxi-pressboat route, and pretty soon we were on the aft deck of the *S. S. Victory*, staring with open eyes, mouth, and enthusiasm at the glorious Gloria. I was asking her the old stand-bys: "How do you like our skyscrapers?" and "What do you think of American men?" Meanwhile scribbling arrow-pierced hearts on the back of an old envelope; Johnny was squinting at his Wesson and trying to decide which gamb was the more photogenic.

Finally he said: "Now—if you'll please sit on the rail, Miss deLuys—" Which she did, and her skirt was one of those knee-length things anyway, and don't you love these windy spring mornings? And Johnny said, "O. K., Dopey, let's have the box."

And then it happened. Dopey took two steps forward, tripped over a shadow and fell flat on his tonsils. The box flew from his hands, made a three-point landing on the deck, and went *"Yingle, yingle!"* like a Swedish sleighbell.

Cartwright let loose an anguished cry: "Great galloping saints! You clumsy—"

Dopey lurched after the camera on all fours, picked it up, shook it gingerly. He said, "I . . . I'm sorry, Mr. Cartwright. I didn't mean to—"

Johnny jerked it savagely from his hands. "If it's busted," he promised, "I'll carve your dome into a totem pole." But he inspected the camera, nodded, mollified. "All right. Now, if your ready, Miss deLuys."

So she was, and we were, and the breeze was highly co-operative, and we

snapped this and that and the other thing, and after a while we went back to the office. Dopey took the film into the dark room to develop it, and Johnny and I took time out for a smoke.

Pretty soon Johnny said: "Well, they ought to be out of the soup now. Let's go see what we got." So we went back to the dark room, only Dopey wasn't there, which meant the prints had already gone to the chief's desk. So we strolled over there.

THE CHIEF saw us coming, and hurriedly stuffed something into the top drawer of his desk. I might have guessed there was putrescence in Peru, because his voice was just too, too sweet. He beamed at us and said: "Well, boys, it didn't take you very long to cover your assignment."

Johnny said: "Aw, you know us, chief. Do or die for the dear old *World-News.*"

"I like that," mused the chief, "especially the last part." He turned to me. "I suppose you got your story, Ted?"

"It's on the spike," I told him.

"No doubt you got Miss deLuys' views on our handsome men and handsomer buildings?"

I said: "Well, now, chief—there's not much else to ask an entertainer. She wouldn't know anything about the war situation. I—"

"And you, Johnny? I suppose you made some startling shots of Miss deLuys' celebrated profile?"

Johnny said complacently: "Is that what they call 'em in England? You learn something every day. Maybe I ought to title the pix 'Profile in Silk,' huh?"

"Maybe you two," snarled the chief, "ought to start looking for new jobs. What was the score?"

"The . . . the score?"

"Maybe you didn't go to the ball game? Then where were you? Down at Joe's exercising your elbows?"

Johnny said: "Hey, now! Wait a minute, chief! You sent us down to interview DeLuys; that's where we went. You got the proof, didn't you? You've seen the pix?"

"I've seen *these!*" He opened his drawer, yanked a handful of glossies out and tossed them before us. "A fine pair of newspaper men *you* are! I give you a simple assignment and you go out and gold-brick it somewhere. And to add insult to laziness, you have the almighty gall to hand in a batch of faked shots!"

I stared at the 8 x 10s and swallowed hard. Not one of them was graced with the lines of Gorgeous Gloria's manifold charms. There was no deck, no aft rail of the *S. S. Victory.* Instead, there were a round dozen shots of the lower Hudson—and right smack in the middle of the river was the most fantastic thing you ever saw. A picture of a huge steamship blazing like the seven fires of Hades!

Small boats were being lowered from her sides, the water was dotted with the heads of frantic swimmers; people were leaping from the burning ship. One of the pictures showed a fireboat churning up; another showed the same fireboat in position, its sturdy stream damping a portion of the blaze into black smudge.

Johnny gasped. He said: "But . . . but that's the *S. S. Cymbeline,* chief! These aren't my pix. We didn't see anything like this. This is awful! When did it happen?"

"That's just it. It didn't happen. The *S. S. Cymbeline* is on her way here

from Bermuda; she won't dock till tomorrow. That's where you made your mistake, wise guy. Next time you fake pix, be sure to paint out the name of the boat. Now"—the chief's voice rose, and so did he—"you two get out of here! You're fired, both of you! Get it?"

Johnny said: "Chief, there must be some mistake. I didn't take those pix. Get Dopey. He'll tell you—"

"Dopey gave me these pix. Don't try to pass the buck. I'm counting three, Cartwright. If you and Lane aren't out of sight by then— One! Two—"

I knew I shouldn't have chipped in when the leg men bought him that bronze paperweight. We left.

DOPEY said, for maybe the hundredth time: "Honest to goodness, Mr. Cartwright, them was your pictures! I developed them myself. I saw them there ship scenes coming up. But you told me to give the prints to the chief, so—"

"Aw, shut up!" Johnny told him wearily. "You're as crazy as a loon, or else you're covering up some dumb trick of your own. But see if I care. I can get a better job than this with a Brownie 2A. What do you say, Ted?"

"The *Trib?*" I suggested.

"O. K. The *Trib.* Gimme that box, Dopey. It's mine, not the paper's. And pack me a couple dozen film packs while you're at it. I'm declaring myself a bonus."

Dopey said nervously: "That . . . that Graflex of yours, Mr. Cartwright. I was looking at it. I . . . I think it got damaged when I dropped it. I'm sorry. If you'll let me, I think I can fix it. The lens and shutter are out of alignment—"

"Skip it! Gimme! Ready, Ted?"

I was. We went out through the City Room. The chief was shoulder-deep in rewrites; he looked up as we passed, grunted once scornfully, and buried himself again. On a sudden whim, Johnny turned the Graflex on him, snapped one.

"I'll enter it in the wild-life contest. Picture of a human ant eater stalking his prey. Let's get out of here."

And that was that. We went to the *Trib.* They were sorry, but you know how times are. They couldn't offer us a great deal. If we would consider fifteen a week—

Johnny suggested an appropriate cache for the offer. And we went to the *Herald-Star.* And to the *Banner.* I began to think, wistfully, of that fifteen a week. And even more wistfully of the

forty per I'd been dragging down at the *World-News*.

At two in the a. m. we had covered the town. But we didn't have any jobs. We had a cup of coffee and a bun, then went to our separate hovels. I tumbled into bed and into the arms of Kid Morpheus; the next thing I knew it was broad daylight. Two in the afternoon.

I dressed and went out for breakfast. From force of habit I bought a copy of the *World-News*. Over my orange juice I spread it open—

Suddenly there was orange juice all over the table, and a waitress was clucking at me reproachfully. But I didn't even hear her. For plastered all over the front page were the pix for which, yesterday, Johnny and I had been given the gate! Top-heavy headlines screamed:

12 DEAD, 130 INJURED IN RIVER TRAGEDY!

Boiler Explosion Blamed for Fire Aboard S. S. Cymbeline

Firemen Fight Spread of Flames; Pier 63 Threatened

(More exclusive *World-News* pictures on Page 9)

THE DARK BLUR I bumped into at the door of the *World-News* office was Johnny Cartwright, coming from the other direction. We said, "Oo-ops, sorry!" then, recognizing each other: "Did you see—" Then we figured our conversation was a hell of a waste of time and charged on upstairs.

The place was in a dither, but it was a jubilant dither. The *World-News* had scored a clean beat on every rag in town, not to mention the uppity press services.

Bud Hawes raved: "Three seconds after the flash came in, the chief was tearing out the label. Don't ask me where he got them pix, he must have pulled 'em out of thin air. But—"

"But, hell!" said Johnny. "Where's the chief?"

"Out somewhere. That reminds me—he said that when you two came in you were to wait for him. He wants to see you."

"I figgered," said Johnny.

We went to the dark room. Dopey met us with glad mumbles.

"I'm glad you come back, Mr. Cartwright. Do you want I should work on that camera now?"

"Don't touchez-pas!" snapped Johnny. "That's French for 'Keep your damn mitts off!', Dopey. But there's a half pack in the adapter. You can develop it if you want to." He looked at me. "The snap of the chief. And a couple I snagged yesterday. Candid stuff. Got a doozey of a breeze-blown babe in front of the National Bank—Hey, there he is now!"

He was there, all right, and he did more gushing than Old Faithful.

"You're both hired back again," he raved, "and I'm putting through raises. Those pictures were the most amazing example of newspaper ingenuity I've ever seen in my years of experience. But, Johnny"—his voice lowered to a whisper—"Johnny, how did you know? Did you have an inside tip? It was sabotage, wasn't it? I hope you two didn't get mixed up in it too deeply?"

Johnny said: "Chief, listen. Those pictures weren't faked. They—"

The chief shrugged; then grinned. "Still sticking to your story, eh, son? Well, O. K. That's your privilege. Have a cigar?"

He handed one to each of us. We took them, accepted a few more verbal pats on the back, then returned to John-

ny's cubby. Johnny looked numb; I, myself, was too dazed to know what questions, if any, to put to him. Dopey stuck his head out of the dark room.

"That you, Mr. Cartwright? Here's your shots."

Johnny took the still-damp prints; I looked at them over his shoulder. The first one threw another jolt of electricity into my already tingling spine. It was a picture of Johnny and me standing in front of the chief's desk. And the chief was handing me a cigar!

I TURNED to Dopey. I said: "Hey, stupid! Who told you to take pictures around this place?"

He looked at me like a startled fawn.

"Who, me? I didn't take no pictures, Mr. Ted. I just developed them what was in the film pack—"

Johnny clutched my shoulder. He said hoarsely: "He didn't do it, Ted! I did it myself. Look at these!"

Swiftly he fingered through the other prints. Most of them were typical scenes about town. A traffic jam at the Square; an empty park bench in Central Park. But as he shuffled them, Johnny said: "When I took this one, there were two lovers on that bench, Ted. This one showed a smash-up at the intersection of Broadway and Seventh. This showed LaGuardia setting a cornerstone—"

There was no Little Flower in the picture. Only two bricklayers setting neat, even rows.

"—and this one"—Johnny gulped—"this one was the one I told you about. A dame in front of the National Bank. And *now* look!"

It looked like a still from a Hollywood "Crime Does Not Pay" short. It showed the front of the National Bank, sure enough. But instead of the femme Johnny claimed should have been there, three thugs were pictured, blasting their way out of the bank! A black touring car stood at the curb, a guard sagged in the doorway, clutching at his middle. Frightened pedestrians were scattering like hares from the scene of the robbery.

I said: "A holdup! But why wasn't it reported? I didn't see anything about it in today's paper, Johnny—"

Johnny's eyes were glowing. He said: "I understand now! Ted, this is terrific! Where's the chief?"

We raced back to the chief's desk. Johnny thrust the pictures at him; the chief looked mildly surprised when he saw the one that pictured himself, leafed through the others with mild interest, but when he came to the bank job—

"Creepers!" he yelled. "When did you get this? A robbery at the National? It's not on the wires."

"And it won't be," Johnny told him tensely, "until tomorrow!"

"What? You mean . . . you mean this is another montage job, Johnny? But we can't let this get by. We've got to notify the police. You'll get in trouble, hiding the source of these tips, boy!"

"It's not a montage job. It's the real thing."

"You mean . . . it happened?"

"It *will* happen. Tomorrow." Johnny turned to me. "Remember when Dopey dropped my box on the deck of the *S. S. Victory?* Something clinked. We thought the box was all right, though. And it was, except that somehow something inside got mixed up.

"That's why we didn't bring back any pictures of DeLuys. Instead, we got pictures of a more important event that was to happen at that same spot *later!* Don't ask me how or why. I'm

a cameraman, not a physicist. All I know is that my camera, somehow, has been injured in such a way that it now takes pictures of that which will occur the next day!"

"What?" roared the chief. "But that's impossible!"

"Incredible, yes. But not impossible. For here's the proof. This picture of you handing cigars to Ted and me. You never did it before in your life until this afternoon—but we took the picture of you yesterday, before we left the office."

Johnny was actually shaking with excitement.

"Dopey said the lens and shutter were knocked out of alignment. Maybe that's the answer. Maybe they've fallen into some crazy angle in relation to one another—scientists say time is a fourth dimension at right angles to all other known dimensions. And it may speed up light rays. I don't know.

"And I don't care much! All I know is that we have here something that will make a fortune for all of us! For me, you, the *World-News*—"

Even the chief had lost his skepticism.

"Tomorrow's news today!" he yelped. "The important European battles. Big national events—gala openings! We'll have experts analyze that box, study the alignment, build a thousand like it! We'll patent it in your name, Johnny!"

I said: "There's another angle, too. Let's keep this under our hats for a while. We can clean up big. Think of the horse races—football games—stock-market standings—"

What a dream. What a blissful, triple dream for the three of us, standing there glowing at each other like summer sunbeams.

"And all because," murmured Johnny softly, "Dopey dropped my camera on the deck of the *S. S. Victory*—"

Dopey's voice shattered the golden spell. It was a pleased, triumphant voice.

"But you don't have to hold that agin' me no longer, Mr. Cartwright," he said. "Because, see, I fixed it!" And he shook his head. "Golly, them insides was in an awful mess. All scrambled up. But I straightened 'em out. I'm a good mechanic, I am—"

So all I've got to say is, if he should come around to your place looking for a job, scream loudly and get out of sight. Send for Johnny Cartwright, or send for me. Either one of us would gladly dispose of the body for you.

But whatever you do, don't give him a job! He's a good mechanic, all right. He fixes things. Oh, he fixes things, all right. And by the way, if you know of anybody who wants to sell a Graflex cheap, send them around, will you? It's got to be cheap, though. Johnny and I have busted about two dozen already, trying to drop them at the proper angle—

THE END.

THE BLEAK SHORE

by FRITZ LEIBER, Jr.

● A tale of two adventurers in an unhistoried world.

Illustrated by M. Isip

"So you think a man can cheat death and outwit doom?" said the small, pale man, whose bulging forehead was shadowed by a black cowl.

The Gray Mouser, holding the dice box ready for a throw, paused and quickly looked sideways at the questioner.

"I said that a cunning man can cheat death for a long time."

The tavern room in ancient Lankhmar, chief city of the unhistoried land of Lankhmar, bustled with pleasantly raucous excitement. Fighting men predominated, and the clank of swordsmen's harness mingled with the thump of tankards, providing a background for the shrill laughter of the women. Swaggering guardsmen elbowed the hired bravoes of the young lords. Grinning slaves bearing open wine jars dodged nimbly between. In one corner a slave girl was dancing, the jingle of her silver anklet bells inaudible in the din. Outside the small, tight-shuttered windows a dry, whistling wind from the south filled the air with dust that eddied between the cobblestones and hazed the stars. But here all was jovial confusion.

The Gray Mouser was one of a dozen at the gaming table. He was dressed all in gray—jerkin, silken shirt, and mouseskin cap—but his dark, flashing eyes and inscrutable smile made him seem more alive than any of the others, save for the huge copper-haired barbarian next him, who roared frequent laughter and drank tankards of the sour, heavy wine of Lankhmar as if it were beer.

"They say you're a skillful swordsman and have come close to death many times," continued the small, pale man in the black robe, his thin lips barely parting as he spoke the words.

But the Mouser had made his throw, and the odd dice of Lankhmar had stopped with the symbols of the eel and serpent uppermost, and he was raking in triangular golden coins. The barbarian answered for him.

"Yes, the gray one handles a sword daintily enough—almost as well as myself. He's also a great cheat at dice."

"Are you, then, Fafhrd the Northerner," said the other, "and do you, too, think a man can cheat death, be he ever so cunning a cheat at dice?"

The barbarian showed his white teeth in a grin and peered puzzledly at the small, pale man whose somber appearance and manner contrasted so strangely with the revelers thronging the low-ceilinged tavern fumy with wine.

"You guess right again," he said in a bantering tone. "I am Fafhrd the Northerner, and ready to put my wits against any doom." He nudged his companion. "Look, Mouser, what do you think of this little black-coated mouse who's sneaked in through a crack in the floor and wants to talk with you and me about death."

THE MAN in black did not seem to notice the jesting insult. Again his bloodless lips hardly moved, yet his words were unaffected by the surrounding clamor, and impinged on the ears of Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser with peculiar clarity.

"It is said you two came close to death in the Forbidden City of the Black Idols, and in the stone trap of Angarngi, and on the misty island in the Sea of Monsters. It is also said that you have walked with doom on the Cold Waste and through the Mazes of Klesht. But who may be sure of these things, and whether death and doom were truly near? Who knows but what you are both braggarts who have boasted once too often? Now I have heard tell that death sometimes calls to a man in a voice only he can hear. Then he must rise and leave his friends and go to whatever place death shall bid him, and there meet his doom.

Has death ever called to you in such a fashion?"

Fafhrd might have laughed, but did not. The Mouser had a witty rejoinder on the tip of his tongue, but instead he heard himself saying: "In what words might death call?"

"That would depend," said the small man. "He might look at two such as you and say 'The Bleak Shore.' Nothing more than that. 'The Bleak Shore.' And you would have to go."

This time Fafhrd tried to laugh, but the laugh never came. Both of them could only meet the gaze of the small man with the white, bulging forehead, stare stupidly into his cold, cavernous eyes. Around them the tavern roared with mirth at some jest. A drunken guardsman was bellowing a song. The gamblers called impatiently to the Mouser to stake his next wager. A giggling woman in red and gold stumbled past the small, pale man, almost brushing the black cowl that covered his pate. But he did not move. And Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser continued to stare—fascinatedly, helplessly—into his chill, black eyes, which now seemed to them twin tunnels leading into a far and evil distance. Something deeper than fear gripped them in iron paralysis. The tavern became faint and soundless, as if viewed through many thicknesses of glass. They saw only the eyes and what lay beyond the eyes, something desolate, drear, and deadly.

"The Bleak Shore," he repeated, "and they would have to go."

Then those in the tavern saw Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser rise, and without sign or word of leave-taking, walk together to the low oaken door. A guardsman cursed as the huge Northerner blindly shoved him out of the way. There were a few shouted questions and mocking comments—the Mouser had been winning—but these were quickly hushed, for all perceived something strange and alien in the manner of the two. Of the small, pale, black-robed man none took notice. They saw the door open. They heard the dry moaning of the wind and a hollow flapping that probably came from the awnings. They saw an eddy of dust swirl up from the threshold. Then the door was closed and Fafhrd and the Mouser were gone.

No one saw them on their way to the great stone docks that bank the River Hlal from one end of Lankhmar to the other. No one saw Fafhrd's north-rigged, red-sailed sloop cast off and slip out into the current that slides down to the squally Inner Sea. The night was dark and the dust kept men indoors. But the next day they were gone, and the boat with them, and its Mingol crew of four—these being slave prisoners, sworn to life service, whom Fafhrd and the Mouser had brought back from their foray against the Forbidden City of the Black Idols.

About a fortnight later a tale came back to Lankhmar from Earth's End, the little harbor town that lies farthest of all towns to the west, on the very margin of the shipless Outer Sea; a tale of how a north-rigged sloop had come into port to take on an unusually large amount of food and water—unusually large because there were only six in the crew: a sullen, white-skinned northern barbarian; an unsmiling little man in gray; and four squat, stolid, black-haired Mingols. Afterward the sloop had sailed straight into the sunset. The people of Earth's End had watched the red sail until nightfall, shaking their heads at its audacious

progress. When this tale was repeated in Lankhmar, there were others who shook their heads, and some who spoke significantly of the peculiar behavior of the two companions on the night of their departure. And as the weeks dragged out into months and the months slowly succeeded one another, there were many who talked of Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser as two dead men.

Then Ourph the Mingol appeared and told his curious story to the dockmen of Lankhmar. There was some difference of opinion as to the validity of the story, for although Ourph spoke the soft language of Lankhmar moderately well, he was an outsider, and, after he was gone, no one could prove that he was or was not one of the four Mingols who had sailed with the north-rigged sloop. Moreover, his story did not answer several puzzling questions, which is one of the reasons that many thought it untrue.

"They were mad," said Ourph, "or else under a curse, those two men, the great one and the small one. I suspected it when they spared our lives under the very walls of the Forbidden City. I knew it for certain when they sailed west and west and west, never reefing, never changing course, always keeping the star of the ice fields on our right hand. They talked little, they slept little, they laughed not at all. Ola, they were cursed! As for us four—Teevs, Larlt, Ouwenyis, and I—we were ignored but not abused. We had our amulets to keep off evil magics. We were sworn slaves to the death. We were men of the Forbidden City. We made no mutiny.

"For many days we sailed. The sea was stormless and empty around us, and small, very small; it looked as if it bent down out of sight to the north and the south and the awful west, as if the sea ended an hour's sail from where we were. And then it began to look that way to the east, too. But the great Northerner's hand rested on the steering oar like a curse, and the small gray one's hand was as firm. We four sat mostly in the bow, for there was little enough sail-tending, and diced our destinies at night and morning, and gambled for our amulets and money and clothes—we would have played for our hides and bones, were we not slaves.

"To keep track of the days, I tied a cord round my right thumb and moved it over a finger each day until it passed from right little finger to left little finger and came to my left thumb. Then I put it on Teev's right thumb. When it came to his left thumb he gave it to Larlt. So we numbered the days and knew them. And each day the sky became emptier and the sea smaller, until it seemed that the end of the sea was but a bowshot away from our stem and sides and stern. Teevs said that we were upon an enchanted patch of water that was being drawn through the air toward the red star that is Hell. Surely Teevs may have been right. There cannot be so much water to the west. I have crossed the Inner Sea and the Sea of Monsters—and I say so.

"It was when the cord was around Larlt's left ring finger that the great storm came at us from the southeast. For three days it blew stronger and stronger, smiting the water into great seething waves; crags and gullies piled mast-high with foam. No other men have seen such waves nor should see them; they are not churned for us or for our oceans. Then I had further proof that our masters were under a curse. They took no notice of the storm;

they let it reef their sails for them. They took no notice when Teevs was washed overboard, when we were half swamped and filled to the gunwales with spume, our bailing buckets foaming like tankards of beer. They stood in the stern, both braced against the steering oar, both drenched by the following waves, staring straight ahead, seeming to hold converse with creatures that only the bewitched can hear. Ola! They were accursed! Some evil demon was preserving their lives for a dark reason of his own. How else came we safe through the storm?

"For when the cord was on Larlt's left thumb, the towering waves and briny foam gave way to a great black sea swell that the whistling gale from the west rippled but did not whiten. When the dawn came and we first saw it, Ouwenyis cried out that we were riding by magics upon a sea of black sand; and Larlt averred that we were fallen during the storm into the ocean of sulphurous oil that some say lies under the earth—for Larlt has seen the black, bubbling lakes of the Far East; and I remembered what Teevs had said and wondered if our patch of water had not been carried through the thin air and plunged into a wholly different sea on a wholly different world. But the small gray one heard our talk and dipped a bucket over the side and soused us with it, so that we knew our hull was still in water and that the water still was salt—wherever that water might be.

"And then he bid us patch the sails and make the sloop shipshape. By midday we were flying west at a speed even greater than we had made during the storm, but so long were the swells and so swift did they move with us that we could only climb five or six in a whole day. By the Black Idols, but they were long!

"And so the cord moved across Ou-

Historical Wood Relic from the Most Sacred Building in America

When Independence Hall was being restored, beams that supported the famous East Room, in which the Declaration of Independence was signed, were removed.

Over these beams have walked George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and many others—the wood has become sacred.

Pieces of these beams, with sworn affidavits as to their source, have been mounted on beautiful cards, size 10"x14", all lithographed in three colors and ready to frame.

Every patriotic American should have in his home, a relic from America's most sacred shrine. We will mail the card and relic attached, ready for framing, for only 25 cents.

WOLF ART COMPANY
S. E. Corner 3rd & Cambria Sts.
Philadelphia, Pa.

Inclosed is 25 cents. Kindly send me the Historical Wood Relic ready for framing.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY..... STATE.....

wenyis' fingers. But the clouds were as leaden dark above us as was the strange sea heavy around our hull, and we knew not if the light that came through them was that of the sun or of some wizard moon, and when we caught sight of the stars they seemed strange. And still the white hand of the Northerner lay heavy on the steering oar, and still he and the gray one stared straight ahead. But on the third day of our flight across that black expanse the Northerner broke silence. A mirthless, terrible smile twisted his lips, and I heard him mutter 'The Bleak Shore.' Nothing more than that. The gray one nodded, as if there were some portentous magic in the words. Four times I heard the words pass the Northerner's lips, so that they were imprinted on my memory.

"The days grew darker and colder, and the clouds slid lower and lower, threatening, like the roof of a great cavern. And when the cord was on Ouwenyis' pointing finger we saw a leaden and motionless extent ahead of us, looking like the swells, but rising above them, and we knew that we were come to 'The Bleak Shore.'

"Higher and higher that shore rose, until we could distinguish the towering basalt crags, rounded like the sea swell, studded here and there with gray boulders, whitened in spots as if by the droppings of birds—yet we saw no birds. Above the cliffs were the dark clouds, and below them was a strip of pale sand, nothing more. Then the Northerner bent the steering oar and sent us straight in, as though he intended our destruction; but at the last moment he passed us at mast length by a rounded reef that hardly rose above the crest of the swell and found us harbor room. We sent the anchor over and rode safe.

"Then the Northerner and the gray one, moving like men in a dream, accoutered themselves, a shirt of light chain mail and a rounded, uncrested helmet for each—both helmets and shirts white with salt from the foam and spray of the storm. And they bound their swords to their sides, and wrapped great cloaks about them, and took a little food and a little water, and bade us unship the small boat. And I rowed them ashore and they stepped out onto the beach and walked toward the cliffs. Then, although I was much frightened, I cried out after them, 'Where are you going? Shall we follow? What shall we do?' For several moments there was no reply. Then, without turning his head, the gray one answered, his voice a low, hoarse whisper. And he said, 'Do not follow. We are dead men. Go back if you can.'

"And I shuddered and bowed my head to his words and rowed out to the ship. Ouwenyis and Larlt and I watched them climb the high, rounded crags. They grew smaller and smaller, until the Northerner was no more than a tiny, slim beetle and his gray companion almost invisible, save when they crossed a whitened space. Then a wind came down from the crags and blew the swell away from the shore, and we knew we could make sail. But we stayed—for were we not sworn slaves? And am I not a Mingol?

"As evening darkened, the wind blew stronger, and our desire to depart—if only to drown in the unknown sea—became greater. For we did not like the strangely rounded basalt crags of The Bleak Shore; we did not like it that we saw no gulls or hawks or birds of any kind in the leaden air, no seaweed

on the beach. And we all three began to catch glimpses of something shimmering and black at the summit of the cliffs. Yet it was not until the third hour of night that we upped anchor and left The Bleak Shore behind.

"There was another great storm after we were out several days, and perhaps it hurled us back into the seas we know. Ouwenyis was washed overboard and Larlt went mad from thirst, and toward the end I knew not myself what was happening. Only I was cast up on the southern coast near Quarmall and, after many difficulties, am come here to Lankhmar. But my dreams are haunted by those black cliffs and by visions of the whitening bones of my masters, and their grinning skulls staring empty-eyed at something strange and deadly."

Unconscious of the fatigue that stiffened his muscles, the Gray Mouser wormed his way past the last boulder, finding shallow handholds and footholds at the juncture of the granite and black basalt, and finally stood erect on the top of the rounded crags that walled The Bleak Shore. He was aware that Fafhrd the Northerner stood at his side, a vague, hulking figure in whitened chain-mail vest and helmet. But he saw Fafhrd vaguely, as if through many thicknesses of glass. The only things he saw clearly—and it seemed he had been looking at them for an eternity—were two cavernous, tunnellike black eyes, and beyond them something desolate and deadly, which had once been far away but was now close at hand. So it had been, ever since he had risen from the gaming table in the low-ceilinged tavern in Lankhmar. Vaguely he remembered the staring people of Earth's End, the foam and fury of the storm, the curve of the black sea swell, and the look of terror on the face of Ourph the Mingol; these memories, too, came to him as if through many thicknesses of glass. Dimly he realized that he and his companions were under a curse, and that they were now come to the source of that curse.

For the flat landscape that spread out before them was without sign of life. In front of them the basalt dipped down to form a large hollow floored with black sand—tiny particles of iron ore. In the sand were half embedded more than twoscore of what seemed to the Gray Mouser to be inky-black, oval boulders of various sizes. But they were too perfectly rounded, too regular in form, and slowly it was borne in on the Mouser's consciousness that they were not boulders, but monstrous black eggs, a few small, some so large that a man could not have clasped his arms around them, one huge as a hemispherical tent.

Scattered over the sand were bones, large and small. The Mouser recognized the tusked skull of a boar, and two smaller ones—wolves. There was the skeleton of some great predatory cat, crouched as if for attack. Beside it lay the bones of a horse, and beyond them the rib case of a man or ape. The bones lay all around the huge black eggs—a whitely gleaming circle.

From somewhere a toneless voice sounded, thin but clear, like a command, saying: "For warriors, a warrior's doom."

The Mouser knew the voice, for it had been echoing in his ears for weeks, ever since it had first come from the lips of a pale, bulging-foreheaded little man in a black robe sitting near him in a tavern in Lankhmar.

Then he saw that what lay before him was not utterly lifeless. Movement of a sort had come to The Bleak Shore.

FLIGHT CALCULATOR

FREE!

● This Flight Calculator is an inexpensive copy of an expensive instrument. Made up of celluloid, it sells in the better shops, for $2.00 and upward.

We had a copy made on inexpensive but sturdy stock and are offering it absolutely free with each copy of AIR PROGRESS. Every aviation fan should have his copy for it contains hundreds of photographs, many pages in full color, especially mounted for framing; air personalities; the language of flying; detailed drawings and many other new and unique features.

AIR PROGRESS
Dept. N-N
79 Seventh Avenue
New York, N. Y.

Here is my quarter. Kindly mail me AIR PROGRESS and one Flight Calculator.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....

A crack had appeared in one of the great black eggs, and then in another, and the cracks were branching, widening as bits of shell fell to the black, sandy floor.

The Mouser knew that this was happening in answer to the voice. He knew this was the end to which the thin voice had called him across the Outer Sea. Powerless to move farther, he dully watched the slow progress of this monstrous birth. Under the darkening, leaden sky he watched twin deaths hatching out for him and his companion.

The first hint to their nature came in the form of a long, swordlike claw which struck out through a crack, widening it farther. Fragments of shell fell more swiftly.

The two creatures which emerged in the gathering dusk were monstrous even to the Mouser's drugged mind. Shambling things, erect like men but taller, with reptilian heads boned and crested like helmets, feet clawed like a lizard's, shoulders topped with bony spikes, forelimbs each terminating in a single yard-long claw. In the semidarkness they seemed like hideous caricatures of fighting men, armored and bearing swords. Dusk did not hide the yellow of their blinking eyes.

Then the voice called again: "For warriors, a warrior's doom."

At those words the bonds of paralysis dropped from the Mouser. For an instant he thought he was waking from a dream. But then he saw the new-hatched creatures racing toward them, a shrill, eager screeching issuing from their long muzzles. From beside him he heard a quick, rasping sound as Fafhrd's sword whipped from its scabbard. Then the Mouser drew his own blade, and a moment later it crashed against a steellike claw which thrust at his throat. Simultaneously, Fafhrd par-

ried a like blow from the other monster.

What followed was nightmare. Claws that were swords slashed and stabbed. Not so swiftly that they could not be parried, though there were four against two. Counterthrusts glanced off impenetrable bony armor. Both creatures suddenly wheeled, striking at the Mouser. Fafhrd drove in from the side, saving him. Slowly the two companions were driven back toward where the crag sheered off. The beasts seemed tireless, creatures of bone and metal rather than flesh. The Mouser foresaw the end. He and Fafhrd might hold them off for a while longer, but eventually fatigue would supervene; their parries would become slower, weaker; the beasts would have them.

As if in anticipation of this, the Mouser felt a claw nick his wrist. It was then that he remembered the dark, cavernous eyes that had drawn them across the Outer Sea, the voice that had loosed doom upon them. He was gripped with a strange, mad rage—not against the beasts but their master. From down in the black, sanded hollow he seemed to see the black, dead eyes staring at him. Then he lost control of his actions. When the two monsters next attempted a double attack on Fafhrd he did not turn to help, but instead dodged past and dashed down into the hollow, toward the embedded eggs.

Left to face the monsters alone, Fafhrd fought like a madman himself, his great sword whistling as his last resources of energy jolted his muscles. He hardly noticed when one of the beasts turned back to pursue his comrade.

The Mouser stood among the eggs, facing one of a glossier hue and smaller than most. Vindictively he brought his sword crashing down upon it. The blow numbed his hand. It shattered open.

Then the Mouser knew the source of the evil of The Bleak Shore, spawned by hell knew what alien creature, lying here like a foul blot, spreading death and calling men to doom. Behind him he heard the scrabbling steps and eager screeching of the monster chosen for his destruction. But he did not turn. Instead, he raised his sword and brought it down whirring on the half-embryonic creature gloating in secret over the men he had called to death, down on the bulging forehead of the small pale man with the thin lips.

Then he waited for the finishing blow of the claw. It did not come. Turning, he saw the monster sprawled motionless on the black sand. Around him, the deadly eggs were crumbling to dust. Silhouetted against the lesser darkness of the sky, he saw Fafhrd stumbling toward him, sobbing out vague words of relief and wonder in a deep, throaty voice. Death was gone from The Bleak Shore, the curse cut off at the root. From out of the night sounded the exultant cry of a sea bird, and Fafhrd and the Mouser thought of the long, trackless road leading back to Lankhmar.

THE END.

When you've finished UNKNOWN—the junk pile won't appreciate it. But a friend might.

ARE YOU THERE?

by MONA FARNSWORTH

The ghost was just a nuisance to the girl—but none of the ghost-laying formulas worked worth a darn. So, she invented her own—

Illustrated by F. Kramer

THE ghost, standing in the doorway, flicked an ash from his cigarette with a long, bony finger. The ash didn't fall because it really wasn't there. But, then, neither was the ghost.

At least, that's what the girl reading in the big armchair told herself. "You're really not there at all," she said. And she said it loud enough to make it more convincing.

The ghost cleared his throat. It sounded a little like the dead branch of a tree scraping against the windowpane, and that is what the girl—whose name was Rose Anne—preferred to think it was. Just a dead branch scraping.

"You can't really be there," she said again.

And this time the ghost spoke. "That," he said, "is a matter of opinion."

Rose Anne sat up straighter. She tilted her head, letting him see her jaw, which was pretty enough to look at but would brook no nonsense.

"No, it's not," she said. "It's not a matter of opinion at all. There's no such thing as ghosts. This book I'm reading says so." She exhibited the book. A nice piece of crimson binding enriched by fine gold ornamentation. "This book," explained Rose Anne, "spends two hundred and fifty pages proving there cannot possibly be such a thing as a ghost."

"That is interesting," said the ghost, "but hardly conclusive. Books," he added, "are notoriously misleading. Only fools really believe that a thing must be so because it is in print."

Rose Anne's eyes flicked with exasperation. "All right," she said crossly, "if you're so smart, you prove it, then. If you really exist, it's up to you to make me believe it."

The ghost looked at her. His eyes were large and luminous, with a shine in them that made Rose Anne feel he was laughing at her. Or perhaps that was because the light in the hall behind him shone through his transparency, giving him a kind of palpitating, roseate glow.

"You've got this thing backward," he said when he'd completed his brief period of reflection. "It strikes me that, in this case, the burden of proof does not rest upon me, but upon you. It's up to you to prove that I don't exist. For instance," he suggested helpfully, "you might try to get rid of me." He flicked another ash from his cigarette, and the movement was unappetizingly accompanied by the distinct sound of cracking knuckles.

Rose Anne sprang to her feet. Her eyes shot small sparks and the temper that went with her torch of red hair was plainly in evidence.

"This is all utter nonsense," she snapped, and added loudly. "You don't exist, and that's all there is to it!" She

The lighter flared, but when she tried to light the cigarette, blew out. She decided not to smoke.

whipped into the next room, then, to change her dress and put a nice mouth on her face and get ready generally for the time she was fixing to have at Nona's party.

She'd got about half of these chores done when she saw the eyes gleaming at her quietly from a corner of the room. She started. And something cold tapped on her spine between her shoul-

der blades. Then she saw the shadowy movement, heard the bony knuckles crack—and knew that an ash that wasn't there was being knocked off a cigarette that wasn't there, either. But this time there was more. This time there came to her nostrils the light but definite odor of smoke. Not much. Just the ghost of an odor.

"You darn fool!" snapped Rose Anne, "You *darn* fool!" But just who she was addressing—whether it was the shadow in the corner of her room, or her own somewhat too-white face staring at her from the dressing-table mirror—was a bit uncertain.

ANYHOW, just at that moment the doorbell rang, and when Rose Anne opened the door there was Sam.

"Hello," said Rose Anne. "Pretty slick, sez I, in your white tie and tails."

"You're no mean sight yourself," said Sam, "done up in all that green, fluffy stuff." He took her in his arms and kissed her. Which was all right, because by and by, when they got around to it, they were going to get married. But just now Rose Anne had no time to waste on sentiment. She backed out of Sam's arms and gave him a little push.

"We're late," she said. "Let's get going."

"For Heaven's sake," said Sam, "what's the rush? Nona's parties don't get going till midnight. Or don't you want me to kiss you, maybe?"

Rose Anne didn't answer that one. She just hurried into her room and snatched down her long velvet cloak from its hanger in the closet. The ghost was standing there, watching her, his eyes shining like the eyes of a cat in the darkness, and the tip of his cigarette showing a small jewel of brilliance.

"For the love of mud," said Sam when she got back, "you're as white as a sheet. Been seeing spooks?"

"Sam!" Rose Anne looked as if she'd like to bite him. "Don't talk such nonsense. You know as well as I do there's no such thing as a ghost! Come along." She grabbed his arm and yanked him through the door, slamming it definitely behind her. It was with definite satisfaction that she heard the spring-lock click.

She laughed going down in the elevator. She snuggled her shoulder, sort of, into the crotch of Sam's arm. Sam laughed, too, and he said: "For a minute, funny-face, I got the idea you didn't love me any more."

"Silly," said Rose Anne, and tripped gayly across the sidewalk to Sam's roadster. The top was down, the thick summer moonlight was a golden flood—and sitting happily in the center of the wide seat was the ghost.

"Say, listen," said Sam, looking at her, "if you're sick, let's not go to Nona's party."

"Sick?" said Rose Anne. "Sick! I'm not sick. I'm—fine."

"You're as pale as a ghost," said Sam. "And I thought—"

"Well, don't think," snapped Rose Anne, "and don't keep talking about ghosts, either. I've told you once there's no such thing!"

"All right—all right," said Sam. He opened the door for her and helped her in. Rose Anne, without more ado, sat down beside the phantom. The seat was broad and there was plenty of room for the three of them, though it left a wide space in the middle that Sam kept looking at.

"You might shove along over here a bit and be sociable," he said after a while. "Or maybe you think I'll give

you measles, or something."

Rose Anne said nothing. But after a minute she moved over, snuggling nicely next to Sam, because the ghost, delicately, had moved. He was perched now out on the radiator, the moonlight shining through him mistily.

And Sam said, "You might offer a guy a cigarette when you take one yourself. It's considered manners." And then he said: "Skip it, sweet—I honestly thought you were smoking. I smelled it."

Out on the radiator the ghost chuckled in high delight. He blew another long pennant of smoke in Sam's direction.

"Say, listen," said Sam, "is this car haunted? I swear I smell smoke—and just then it sounded as if somebody laughed."

Rose Anne blazed up. "Heavenly day!" she snapped. "Can't you talk about anything but ghosts, and haunting, and spooks? There's no such thing, I tell you! No such thing, and I wish to goodness you'd shut up."

"I will," said Sam with frigid politeness. "If that's the way you feel about my conversation, I'll certainly not trouble you with any more." He moved his arm on the wheel so he wouldn't touch her, and she moved back into the far corner of the seat so she wouldn't touch him.

NONA'S party was in full swing when they got there. The neat chromium bar down at the far end of her big living room was doing a fast business, and the modest band imported for the evening was working itself up to a fine fervor out on the terrace. Smoke already lay in flat, drifting layers, and the bursts of high laughter, even now, had a definite edge.

Rose Anne's lips curled. Her eyes took on a sparkle. "Hi!" she yelled, lifting an arm in salute.

"Hi!" said a handsome stranger. "Come on in and catch up."

"I'm your man," said Rose Anne, "as soon as I dust the nose."

She slid into the powder room and dropped her velvet cloak into the hands of a waiting maid. But as she turned toward the mirror she gave a slight start. The ghost was sitting on the dressing-table bench, happily going through the pantomime of powdering his noseless face and painting his lipless mouth.

"Looks like quite a party," he said conversationally. "We ought to have a very good time. Know these people well?"

Rose Anne seemed to congeal. Her face grew pale, and in her wide eyes a horrid thought became visible. "Listen," she whispered, "c-can anyone around here see you? I mean, can any of these people—my friends—see you following me? Sticking close to me—like this?"

The ghost grinned so that his teeth flashed handsomely, and the dressing-table lamps, shining through his transparent eyes, made them gleam in a high delight. "Now how could your friends see me," he asked reasonably, "if I don't exist?"

Rose Anne gulped. She bit her lips. And then she thought of an answer. "That book I read," she told him, "said that people who thought they saw ghosts were just the victims of their own self-hypnotism. So, even if I think I see you, it . . . it doesn't prove at all that you exist. It just proves that . . . that my mind holds your image and . . . . and projects it on the retina of my eyes."

"What rot," said the ghost dispassionately. "What pure drivel. You know," he went on, "it always interests me to observe to what length human beings will go to prove to themselves something that couldn't possibly be true. It almost persuades me to believe that humanity isn't interested in the truth—but only interested in lulling its mind with sufficient sophistry to enable it to creep along in well-padded comfort."

The ghost pulled himself back to the matter in hand: "But all this doesn't answer your question about the possibility of your friends seeing me." His tone dropped apologetically and he looked very ashamed of himself: "I'm sorry—they can't *all* see me, though some of them, of course, will be privileged. But," he brightened considerably, and his tone snapped with cheer, "they will all be able to hear me."

"Hear . . . *hear* you?" Rose Anne suddenly leaned against the dressing table. A line of strain worked itself around her mouth. "What do you mean, hear you?"

"Well," said the ghost, "it's this way. I'm not, naturally, a poltergeist. In fact, I haven't much use for them. They're, generally speaking, low, unintelligible creatures—about on a par with some humans I've known who go about setting tacks in the seats of chairs. I've little enough respect for such horseplay. But"—his spectral robes wavered as if, underneath, he had hitched his bony shoulders in a shrug—"we phantoms learn to become more or less adaptable, so, for the purposes of this emergency, I guess I could borrow some of the poltergeist's technique to quite a bit of advantage." His grin flashed once more. "You'd be surprised, then," he assured Rose Anne, "what your friends will hear!"

Rose Anne clutched at the dressing table with stiff white fingers. "What . . . what is a poltergeist?" she whispered.

"Polter—" The ghost's astonishment gagged him. "You mean to tell me," he said finally, "that you don't know what a poltergeist is? Girl"—he leaned forward earnestly—"you don't seem to know the first thing about this business. And if you hope to deal with me, I can tell you right now you've got to learn a lot somewhere! In the meantime," he chuckled, "I'll show you the kind of thing a poltergeist does. He always begins—like this!"

INSTANTLY every light in the house was extinguished. And at the same moment a reverberating crash echoed from garret to cellar. It sounded as if everything in the house was smashed. Metal gonged on metal; glass shrieked; wood splintered, and out on the stairs the grandfather's clock had apparently lifted itself from the landing and was bouncing as it thudded on each step, the clamor of its chimes adding to the din.

For a minute, paralyzed silence held the party guests. Then somebody struck a light, somebody else found the electric switch, turned it on—and soft illumination flooded in.

An astonished gasp blew from every throat. Not a thing in the house was broken. Not an article of furniture was disarranged.

The ghost turned toward Rose Anne. "Like it?" he asked. And added smugly: "Pretty good performance for a greenhorn, if I do say it myself." But he was boasting to the empty air.

Rose Anne, white-lipped and shaking, had stumbled out to the bar. She needed a drink badly. She needed several. In fact, she was so done in that

when Sam ranged alongside and said, dazedly:

"Whoops—that's enough to make anybody believe in ghosts! What say, sweetness?" Rose Anne had nothing to say. She just leaned against Sam, grateful that he was so solid and definitely substantial.

After that, peace between them was restored, and later Sam drove her home. The ghost, of course, came along, too, watching with an amused and tolerant air of detachment while Sam kissed her good night.

"I used to do much better than that when I was alive," he admitted to Rose Anne after Sam had gone, "much better. It's too bad," he added regretfully, "that I'm not able to give you a demonstration."

Rose Anne made no answer. She'd had all human nerves could endure for the time being. Dull with exhaustion, she snapped off the light, threw herself into bed and fell at once into a sound sleep.

She woke to midmorning sunshine and the sweet song of birds. She sat up in bed—and sharp in her nostrils came the odor of fresh cigarette smoke. Her eyes snapped around the room.

The ghost was sitting, his bony knees pulled up in front of him, in the shadowed depths of her clothes closet.

"I can't be seen so easily in the daylight," he explained obligingly, "so I came in here. I . . . er . . . didn't want you to miss me."

Rose Anne didn't favor him with a reply. She dressed and ate her breakfast with a definite plan stewing in her mind. Rose Anne was no fool, and the ghost, the night before, had given her a definite lead. As soon as she could, she went to work on it.

THE public library was hardly open when Rose Anne tripped lightly along the great marble corridors and flipped her way through the brown leather, brass-studded doors that led to the reference room. Ignorant, was she, as to the habits of ghosts? Well, so help her, she wouldn't be ignorant long! She got an armful of books, repaired to a table, and went through them the way Sherman went through Georgia—not missing a thing.

It took some time—in fact, she spent most of the day at it. And she made copious notes. While the ghost, sitting comfortably in the opposite chair, watched her with amused and tolerant eyes. Occasionally, as she read, he would do small things to assist her, such as turning pages before her fingers got around to it, and once, when she dropped her pencil, he picked it up; a small incident which caused quite a stir among Rose Anne's neighbors, since the pencil apparently sailed through the air without any material assistance, and since Rose Anne, her face a furious scarlet, whispered sibilantly:

"For Heaven's sake, can't you leave me alone even here? Go on home!"

After that the ghost, looking a little ashamed of himself, was quiet, though the twinkle still glittered in his transparent eye as he watched Rose Anne wade through her impressive heap of tomes.

She reached home in the soft twilight of early afternoon and, with the air of one who knew just what she was about, she switched on every light in the apartment. The result was pretty blinding. Rose Anne had to squint against it; all the side lights, and the blazing old-fashioned chandelier, and the modern high-powered reading lamp. Pretty blinding.

And from out this sheet of illumina-

tion the ghost's voice came, delicately edged with disgust.

"I didn't think anybody nowadays would believe that junk."

"It's not junk," said Rose Anne. "It's all in a book called 'Posthumous Humanity,' by Adolphe d'Aussier. I read it today. He says"—she flipped over her notes till she found it, and she read with an air of learning:

"The posthumous personality seems to dread light, an uneasiness which is attributable to the disorganization which all light has upon tissue. We know that light is a vibratory motion impressed upon the ether by incandescent bodies. These vibrations of almost infinite rapidity would soon alter the fluidic tissues of the phantom by dispersing its molecules, if it did not return by day into its tomb or some obscure retreat."

"Hm-m-m," said the ghost. "A handy philosophy, that. So you figure all you have to do, to get rid of me, is to turn on the lights." He sniffed: "Typical woman's reasoning, illogical and senseless. In the first place your contention is that I don't exist—yet you go through this abracadabra trying to get rid of me. In the second place, that book of d'Aussier's is worse than useless, it's old-fashioned and completely outmoded. I will say, though," he added generously, "that possibly at the time it was written, in 1887, phantoms were annoyed by light. But that, after all, was some time ago, and science has advanced in our realm just as it has in yours. Where, for instance, were your airplane and radio in 1887? Nowhere. And it is the same with us. We have advanced scientificially by leaps and bounds. Whatever light may have done to ghosts back in 1887, it means nothing to us now. Nothing!" There was a bony crack as if the ghost, invisible in the glare, had snapped his fingers.

Rose Anne looked a bit crestfallen. Though she immediately poked up her nose and said: "Well, anyway, you can't make yourself seen in all this light. I'm spared the nuisance of having to look at you, at all events."

"Ah," said the ghost, "but you're not spared the nuisance of having to listen to me. And," he chuckled, "without your watchful eye to restrain me I can have a heck of a lot of fun. Like this—see?" As he spoke, a glass cigarette box skittered across the piano top and crashed, splintering. The cigarettes rose of their own accord and flew like small birds to every corner of the room. Then the glass splinters lifted themselves in a glittering dance, whirling and tinkling against themselves.

"Don't!" cried Rose Anne. "Stop! Those shreds of glass will get everywhere. I'll never get them up!"

But before she'd finished speaking, the glass had spun itself into a neat heap—and from the kitchen came a resounding crash. Rose Anne tore out there and stopped aghast. Every pot and pan in the place was doing a fandango on top of the stove.

"Keep quiet!" she yelled. "For Heaven's sake, I'll be put out for making such a racket." And then she got the idea. Her hand whipped out and snapped off the superfluous light.

The pots and pans obligingly flew back to their respective hooks. And the ghost was discovered to be standing negligently in the doorway, quietly smoking his inevitable cigarette.

"By the way," he said casually, "did you find out today what a poltergeist was?"

Rose Anne pulled herself together. "The name comes from two German words," she said shakily, "meaning noisy ghost." Then she added, with

pride: "I know all about them. They are almost never seen; they nearly always function in complete darkness, and any attempt to scold or malign them only makes them worse, whereas a calm, well-controlled attitude of command very often produces an abatement."

"You're quoting," said the ghost accusingly. "That's too smooth for you to be ad libbing it."

Rose Anne flushed: "It was in an article by Hereward Carrington," she said, and added: "It was a very brilliant article."

"So!" The ghost looked delighted. "Why don't you apply his advice then? Why don't you try a bit of a 'well-controlled attitude of command' with me and see how it works?"

For a second Rose Anne was a bit taken aback. She looked flustered. It was obvious that she hadn't expected this sudden challenge. But she hesitated only for a moment. The next instant she was on her feet, her head high, her eyes flashing and her outstretched arm, pointing to the door, flung out on a level with her shoulder.

"Go!" she commanded royally. "Leave me. I wish to be alone *at once!*"

"Do you?" said the ghost with bright and courteous interest. "Well, I swan."

"Are . . . aren't you going?" said Rose Anne.

"No," said the ghost. "First place, I'm having a lot of fun; second place, I'm not, strictly speaking, a poltergeist, as I explained to you last night, so such a rule, even if it would apply to the poltergeists—which I can assure you it wouldn't for they're a stubborn lot—wouldn't apply to me; and, in the third place, I am here for the express purpose of convincing you that ghosts exist. So, until I succeed in convincing you—I'm here."

THE LIGHT of an idea flicked momentarily in the depths of Rose Anne's amber eyes. But she was smart enough to squelch it immediately and to keep her voice even as she said, with a light sigh of resignation:

"Well—I guess you've succeeded. I guess you've convinced me, all right. You're certainly there. I can see you and I can hear you—so you must exist."

The ghost, still leaning his transparent shoulder against the door jamb, didn't move. His luminous eyes seemed to grow bright, and brighter. A small smile curled the corners of his lipless mouth. Finally he laughed outright.

"It's tough for you," he said, "but I may as well tell you now that your thoughts are far more apparent to me than the words you utter. I have to stop to digest the words; but your mind sends its impressions to mine instantaneously. And your mind is no more convinced that I'm real than it was last night when I first appeared to you. You still believe, in spite of all that's happened, that I'm somehow the product of your fevered imagination. And you're just saying this stuff about being convinced in order to get rid of me. So it's no soap," ended the ghost flatly. "I stay."

"But I do believe in you!" Rose Anne came forward a step or two and her eyes were pathetic with the earnest assurance she strove to put into them. "I do believe! Why, if I didn't," she wailed, "would I have gone to all the trouble I've gone to today to try and find out how to lay you? Why would I try to lay a ghost I didn't think existed?"

"God knows," said the specter. "I've wondered about that myself. It seems to me highly illogical if not downright demented. But I've put it down to your being a woman, and contented myself with facing the facts as I found them."

"Th-then you're not going?" Rose Anne's face was white. Her eyes had a trapped look in them.

"I'm not going," said the ghost. "Not till your mind assures me that what your lips want me to believe is really true."

"Then I'll never get rid of you!" Rose Anne's voice whipped to a high hysteria. "I'll never get rid of you! Because I know darn well, no matter what you do, that you don't exist! All that stuff I read in the library"—she was sobbing now—"it was . . . it was just crazy tripe. Nobody in his right mind could believe it. All that fool business about making circles with concentrated chalk, and cabalistic signs, and stabbing the air with well-mesmerized steel—it's nothing but nonsensical drivel!"

"Just what I've said right along," agreed the ghost heartily, "simply because a thing is in print certainly doesn't prove that it's so. But on the other hand"—his eyes gleamed—"the mere fact that no human being has ever managed to collect any authoritative data about phantoms certainly does nothing to prove that we don't exist. It merely shows up the curious limitations of the human mind. And the human mind is, I've discovered, about the most limited thing in the universe. Take you, for example—"

But Rose Anne was, at the moment, no example. The doorbell had sent out a squalling peal and she had flown to answer it.

Sam walked in. And though he didn't seem to know it, he walked right through the ghost who had, somehow, gotten there first. Rose Anne sucked in her breath sharply.

"For Heaven's sake," said Sam, "are you going to begin all that over again? You look scared to death. What's eating you, anyhow?"

"Nothing's eating me," snapped Rose Anne. "Absolutely nothing."

The ghost's eyes gleamed happily as if he'd thought of a good game.

The three of them went in to the living room. Sam started to sit down in the easiest chair.

"Don't sit there!" cried Rose Anne. "Sit . . . sit over here."

"Why?" said Sam. "I always have sat in this chair," he added argumentatively. "Why can't I now?"

Rose Anne bit her lips. She couldn't tell him the ghost was already sitting in it; nor could she explain that the sight of Sam walking through the ghost just now had turned her a little sick and she had no desire to spend the evening looking at them occupying the same chair. So she said crossly:

"Oh, don't ask so many questions. Just sit where I tell you to."

"Lord," said Sam, "you're getting fussy." But he crossed the room and sat on the couch.

The ghost grinned and, rising, moved over to stand near Rose Anne. She fidgeted, twisting her fingers, crossing and uncrossing her knees. Finally she picked a cigarette from the box beside her and snapped open her lighter. The ghost promptly blew it out. Rose Anne, with shaking fingers, dropped the cigarette back in the box.

"Aren't you going to smoke?" asked Sam. "Looks like you're jittery enough to need it." He slid his own case out

of his pocket and reached for the lighter.

The ghost glided over, bent down toward Sam and pursed his lipless mouth ready to blow.

"For Heaven's sake!" gasped Rose Anne. "Do you *have* to smoke? I mean one cigarette after another this way. One cigarette after another—"

"This happens to be," said Sam frigidly, "the first one I've tried to smoke since I came in. But, of course, if you'd rather I didn't smoke, I won't." He snapped his case shut. There was a white line growing around his mouth, and his eyes had a red light in them. "Is there any objection," he inquired with scalding politeness, "to my turning on the radio?" He rose to cross the room. But the ghost was ahead of him, fingering the dials, snapping the little light on and off.

The sight wrenched Rose Anne's nerves. "Oh, my goodness!" she cried. "Can't you sit *still?* Do you have to—"

"No!" yelled Sam. "I don't have to do anything! And I certainly don't have to sit here and listen to your damn nagging! Nag, nag, nag—every second since I've come into this place tonight. And I'm getting out!" He whipped into his overcoat and grabbed his hat. But in the doorway he turned.

"I've told you before," he yelled at her, "that nagging's one thing I won't stand! No decent man will. And if you keep this up you can jolly well . . . jolly well—" he gulped, ground his teeth and slammed out the door.

Rose Anne stood still looking at the closed door. There was a tiny smile quirking the corners of her mouth. A tiny, tiny smile—too small for the ghost to notice. For by the time she turned toward him it was gone, and the etched, vertical lines of irritation were back between her smooth brows.

The ghost was once more in his favorite position, leaning a shadowy shoulder negligently against the doorway. Rose Anne looked at him. Her lips tightened.

"My goodness," she said in the same tone she'd used to Sam, "can't you do anything beside lean in that doorway? Of all the useless things! Neither sitting down nor standing up. Just *leaning!* There are plenty of chairs around. Can't you sit in one?"

The ghost, looking a little astonished, sat down and crossed one bony leg over the other. The movement was accompanied by a stomach-turning creak of joints.

Rose Anne winced. A look of extreme suffering came into her eyes, but she smiled with martyrlike patience. "Please," she murmured, "do you *have* to do that?"

"Have to—do what?"

"That noise," Rose Anne touched her temples delicately, "I have such a headache," she said. "Of course," she added with a long-suffering air, "I try not to complain, but . . . but you do make the most *sickening* noise when you move."

"I'm sorry," said the ghost chillingly, "I'll try to be less annoying to your delicate sensitivities." He sat very still for a while, and Rose Anne sat still, too, her white fingertips pressed to her aching head.

Then the ghost moved slightly, and his bones gave a faint rattle. Rose Anne sucked her breath through her teeth in a tight gasp of pure pain.

The ghost stood up, regardless of the noise he made. "A man has to move," he said defensively.

Rose Anne moved, too. She got up.

"If you'll excuse me," she said with poisonous courtesy, "I'll go to bed." She swept across the floor and vanished into the next room. But five minutes later she poked her head out again. "That cigarette of yours," she began gently, "couldn't you please put it out just for a while? When I . . . when I feel like this, the merest whiff of cigarette smoke is . . . is— Oh, I can't stand it!" Her voice ripped up suddenly: "I can't stand it! I can't *stand—*" Her words shattered suddenly and she broke into high, hysterical sobs.

"Oh, my good gosh," said the ghost, his tone heavy with disgust. But just the same, he walked to the window and tossed out the cigarette. Which, as it happened, did no good at all, since, the cigarette being part of his equipment, it was back in his fingers again instantly.

So that, the next morning when Rose Anne woke, the smoke of it was the first thing she smelled. She sat up in bed, looking sick. The ghost was, as he had been the morning before, cuddled comfortably in the shadows of the closet.

"I thought I asked you," said Rose Anne, "to put that thing out."

The ghost stood up. He stood up straight so that he looked about nine feet tall. And he glowered down at Rose Anne in a manner that was far from pleasant.

"Listen," he said, "I've had about enough of this! When I was alive I was married to a woman like you. She couldn't stand cigarette smoke. And she nagged and nagged and nagged at me till I died out of sheer self-defense."

"I don't blame her," said Rose Anne, "I—"

"Keep quiet," said the ghost. "The point is that when I got up to heaven and they asked me what I wanted most, I said a cigarette that'll burn forever—a cigarette that'll never go out, and that I can smoke and smoke and smoke . . . and to hell with women!"

Rose Anne flinched at his brutality. Then she pulled herself bravely together. "You mean"—she lifted a white face—"that I've got to stand that thing *forever?* You mean—" Her courage broke, she couldn't face it. "I can't stand it!" she sobbed hysterically, beating her small curled fists against the bedclothes. "If you smoke and smoke and smoke—day and night—night and day—"

"Oh, my lord!" said the ghost. "Oh, my good lord!" And it sounded as if the words had come through his teeth.

"But I don't *like* smoke," whimpered Rose Anne. "I just don't like it. It . . . it makes me sick—" Her voice trailed pitifully. "Though I don't expect you," she added pathetically, "to care about that. And I'm sorry I have to keep talking about it. I'm sorry I have to keep bothering you—"

"You're not bothering me," said the ghost, "and you won't bother me. See? No woman—" He seemed to grow a a few feet taller. He thinned out, like a stretched elastic band. "No woman"—his voice was high, tenuous—"no woman is ever going to nag me again—so help me. I'm—gone—"

Rose Anne sat still for a long moment staring at the place where he had been. Then she reached over, picked a cigarette from the box on her bedside table, lit it, and pulled the smoke deep into her lungs.

Relaxing on her pillows, she let the blue cloud curl out slowly from her small pink nostrils. And her eyes, seen that way through the soft haze, looked quite happy and serene.

THE END.

THE TOMMYKNOCKER

By THOMAS CALVERT McCLARY

THE TOMMYKNOCKER

by THOMAS CALVERT McCLARY

A hundred dollars a day to be spent on luxuries only becomes a soul-wearying task—when the hundred dollars is pure magic! Conclusion

Illustrated by Gilmore

Amos Johnson, bookkeeper, was aged forty-three—and stalled. He was a pretty good bookkeeper, a pretty good husband, and a pretty good citizen—and a very good dreamer. He had a fairly comfortable home, and fairly comfortable friends—and was stalled right there, while his dreams went on.

When he had a few free hours he passed them dreaming on a rock in Central Park, or scribbling at a would-be novel—but the rock in Central Park was his castle. And the rock was about to yield to a new subway line; a fact over which he was mourning when he met the very curious little man who was willing to talk about his dreams. Amos, in reply to a question, said that he guessed the thing he most wanted was about a hundred dollars a day that could be spent on nothing but pure foolishness—pure, unneeded luxuries. Money that Abigail, his thrifty, hard-headed, but kindly wife wouldn't feel forced to save away for a rainy day.

He got his wish—the little man being the Tommyknocker of that rock, the gnome inhabitant whose home it was.

For a week it was wonderful. Everything he wanted—except, of course, he couldn't spend it on necessities. He couldn't pay his rent with it, because the money just simply vanished when he did. He found a one-hundred-dollar bill in his pocket every noon, and if it wasn't spent by bedtime—it vanished overnight. Abby tried to save some—and it vanished, whereupon she tearfully accused Amos of stealing it.

At Abby's urging, he was forced to loan some of his restless money to a life-long friend who was about to be dispossessed for nonpayment of rent. And he lost the friend, who naturally believed the money had been taken from him again by sleight of hand as an extremely unfunny joke. Amos, unable to hope that his hard-headed wife would believe for a moment the story of the restless money's origin, could not tell her and get her to withdraw some of the hard-saved regular money for his friend.

The hundred dollars a day was bringing surfeit of useless luxuries—and of trouble!

V.

THE grim business of spending a hundred dollars a day became a nerve-jangling obsession, timed by staccato bursts of temper from a woman who could not understand why they *had* to spend all that money. Almost daily, Amos would make up his mind to explain. He would wet his lips and take a deep breath and get ready to talk. And then he would look at Abby, ready to explode with sharp rebuke, and stare hopelessly at his fingernails. How could he explain something he wasn't sure of and hardly believed himself?

He could feel her suspicion increasing with her sullen incomprehension. There was something very queer about this business, Abigail would say accusingly. Only a man with stolen money would act like that. It looked like Amos was afraid to be found dead with any money on him!

In more tearful moods, she would bewail her fate at being married to a maniac. Only a brute or a crazy man would treat his wife this way, watching every dime she spent, and depriving her of the little savings she could make toward a rainy day. He was a sadist, the kind of a man who locked little girls in a damp cellar, that's what he was! Maybe some morning she would wake up and find herself murdered!

Amos would end these arguments with a sharp reminder, forced out in one frightened breath, that she could stay home if she liked. It was an effective remark, but it left him terrified that one of these days she would take him up. And the people along their dumb-waiter began to regard him with peculiar interest; the men, with broad grins; the women, with cold indignation or dark suspicion.

One day, he thought Mrs. Mulligan hissed at his back, *"Wife-beater!"*

Amos tried to make up for his deception with thoughtful little favors—flowers, candy, tickets for fashion shows and afternoon entertainment for Abigail. Their house looked like a cross between a hospital room and a funeral parlor. His attentions only added to Abigail's seething suspicions. A husband must be hiding something very black to give his wife so much thought!

Amos would hold an unhappy silence. He simply had to spend that money. He knew it now. He had made methodical tests on the things he could do with it, and it was certain that not one penny could be spent on the ordinary routine expenses of living. When he tried, the money vanished. Like the time he bought the large jar of caviar and the box of salt and discovered he had exactly enough to pay for the caviar. The salt money had to be paid out of his regular salary.

He felt guilty over their wild expenses. But when money vanished, unspent, he felt positively frightened and sinful. It seemed to be a warning that the money might cease appearing daily. In a way he was glad for the feverish pace of spending. It kept Abby from talking too much.

But there was a kind of hectic golden daze to the first few weeks. It gave Amos a kick just to sneak out his money and look at it. It made him feel like a real sport to know that he had a hundred dollars when the boys began boasting about their little, and largely imagined, streaks of luck with the ponies.

He had a great time just owning and feeling that money in his pocket. He would walk through crowds of people in a happy glow, knowing that he could do any foolish thing that struck him. He would have been satisfied just walking around with the money, taking in an extra movie now and then, and thinking over some special thing they wanted to do.

It gave a man a real lift to be able to give a friend a cigarette lighter any old time he liked, or to pass around a pack of expensive cigarettes, and not have to give a hoot how many Louis Seidt grubbed from the pack. It was funny to watch how the treat of a cup of coffee and a cigar would oil up Angus Gilly's fund of stories.

A FELLOW could swagger a little when he could talk, offhand, about a boat ride that week end, or an expensive midtown night club. It made him feel like somebody when the other clerks rubbernecked to see his new tie or a pair of shoes, and whispered about him mysteriously behind the files. And there was the tremendous elation of that day he wore his third new suit and treated four of the boys to lunch. They hung on his political opinions with almost the respect they showed Mr. Flanagan!

Amos had a good time with those little things, particularly with the sheer joy of possession. Sometimes he would go home and stand in front of his closet and feel his suits and feel like a million dollars, just looking at them. It was pretty swell, having to figure which coat to wear with which pants; then look over a drawer full of socks and underwear and pick out the combination he wanted to go with tie and handkerchief. It was more fun than wearing them, just looking at their rich colors and design, and arranging them in neat piles.

It would have been nice if he and Abby had simply been able to parade around the neighborhood and show off their new things. Sometimes it seemed kind of senseless, having all that stuff and not being able to show off more in front of people they knew. But there was no time for that, what with shopping and having to think of things to buy and how to spend the money every day.

Somehow it didn't seem like there were so many things a man could buy when he set out to. Take that four-dollar knife, with enough gadgets on it to build a house—even a surgeon's scalpel blade. It had been a lot of fun, just looking at it and tinkering with it for a couple of days. But all the kick went out of it when he acquired three more something like it. And take cuff links. You might think a fellow could spend a fortune on cuff links. Amos had bought a whole set of them, even. He had a special box for them, with so many cuff links he had to poke around to find pairs. Their total cost, including the real crystal and the real gold ones, was less than a hundred and fifty dollars!

It was getting to be a terrible problem, just figuring out ways to spend that money. They grew red-eyed looking at advertisements. Their feet were sore with shopping. Their nerves were shot with the tension, and they were fidgety from lack of sleep. They had unearthed the most expensive places in the city where they could spend less than a hundred dollars at one time. And still there was always danger of money left over.

"If I were a drinking man maybe it would help," Amos thought once. But his endeavor in that direction made him hopelessly ill. Besides, he got so drunk on four dollars he was physically unable to spend another dime.

He thought morosely about these fifteen-thousand-dollar fur coats you read about. Something like that would have been a big help. But how could they buy anything really expensive in that way when he could never be sure how long the money would keep coming or what would happen to it? They couldn't save it, even overnight. That day he was sick, Abby had only spent sixty dollars and the remainder vanished, just like the first time.

The peace was gone from Amos' life. Whatever they tried to do seemed to work out like that week end at that re-

sort hotel. Thirty dollars a day they paid, and every meal check ran six or eight dollars. It would have been nice just taking a swim and things kind of easy, but they had to spend the rest of that money. They had indigestion from the rich food; they were giddy from a whirl of night clubs; and only the doctor's bill saved them from having money left at that!

Amos had tried to be systematic. They had sent for catalogues and made endless lists. Half the things they bought were stored down in the cellar; for instance, the stone-working machine that had intrigued Amos, and the complete set of airplane luggage that Abigail had liked. There were ten overpriced sets of books down there; the set of rugs; the dining-room set Abigail had bought at auction; and the nine-course set of dishes for twelve people.

But they could not bring themselves to the extreme foibles of the rich. They had considered a little set of blown-glass mice playing band instruments. Abigail forgot her smoldering rage long enough to laugh with delight. The set was seventy-five dollars. But seventy-five dollars for something utterly useless had shaken even Amos' determination to spend. Nor had they been able to bring themselves to buy an antique bronze mirror for ninety dollars.

The solid-silver table set had seemed like a thought from heaven. They could approve of that, and it was expensive. And they could buy it in sections. The spoons one day, the knives another. It had taken eight days to acquire the set.

But there wasn't room in the small, twenty-nine-dollar flat for all their things. The place was choked. They had to crowd the silver in a drawer. It got scratched, and besides, to look at it, Abigail had to take it out and spread it on the table. To clear the table, she had to pile things on the chairs, which was the way she broke the cover of her miniature plant garden.

Abigail's wrath was up to old form when she demanded to know why they could not move into a larger place.

Amos set his teeth. "Because we can't risk it, Abby! Suppose my work ends tomorrow. How would we pay the rent?"

"If you'd given me twenty-five percent of what you've spent, Amos, we could have bought a house of our own!"

Amos slammed on his hat and went out to the corner. He had no answer. He could not tell her that three times he had tried to pay for a new apartment, and that each time the money had vanished under his hand. He had thought about taking another place and keeping the old one, which would make the new one an outright luxury. Maybe the money would pay for that. But suppose the money stopped altogether the next day?

In the midst of this period, Abigail did over the house from top to bottom. The bills ran seventy and eighty dollars a day. There was the new washing machine, an electric box and stove. There was the combination radio-phonograph and silver cupboard. It took two days to pay for that. Amos risked it with the agreement that if he could not make the second payment the man would give them a plain radio instead.

Amos and Abby did a lot of home entertaining, eating luscious steaks and roasts, and taking in an expensive movie afterward, with maybe a midnight snack at some Broadway club to finish

the bank roll. Their friends complimented Abigail enviously on her new kitchen and linens, the furnishings and her clothes. The men smoked Amos' cigars, and took a drink of his brandy, and got speculative about Amos' new outside work.

"Must be real confidential auditing," Les Elling said one night. "The kind of overhauling that makes headlines, eh, Amos?"

Amos enjoyed being mysterious. "It's high-priced work," he grinned. He got huge pleasure out of Les trying to pump him on details.

But the Ellings and the Bishops and the Blacks grew distant and less neighborly after a few evenings at the house. Tonight, the Ellings had hedged out of dinner for the third time in two weeks.

"And I was going to wear my new wine dress, too!" Abigail sobbed bitterly. "What good are clothes when people don't want to see you?"

Amos wandered aimlessly around the apartment. He looked in his den, half its former size because it had been necessary to build in a closet. He looked at all his suits and coats and hats. Shoes were two deep on the floor. Some of them he had never worn. And his feet hurt from the others.

He came back to the living room and lit a twenty-five-cent cigar. The rich smoke tasted sour. He laid it in the solid bronze ash tray that had cost fifteen dollars. He glanced at Abigail, crying over the drawer that held their new gleaming silver.

"Everybody we know is ducking us, Amos, and we've got all those nice things to eat going to waste!" She gestured toward the kitchen shelves, loaded solid with titbits and delicacies. Most of them, they had never tasted.

Amos snapped, "Well, I can't help it if they don't know good eating! Les Elling's got a nerve snubbing our food!"

Abigail eyed him resolutely. "It's not the food they're snubbing, Amos. It's you."

He looked miserably at his new twenty-one-jewel watch. "Gee, Abby, all I've done is to try to get you the things you wanted and give our friends a good time. Why most of them never had been in places like we've taken them. The Black Hat and Pasadena Club—places real society people go! We sat next to the president of my company there one night."

She began to sob again. "Well, you aren't the president of your company and you shouldn't be going there! Besides, I don't have a good time. All that fancy food upsets my stomach something terrible. And it looks to me like most of the places we been going, people just go to get drunk."

Amos edged through the bare space between chairs and table in the overcrowded room. He tried to look cheerful.

"Tell you what. You get dressed and I'll go get the Ellings. Maybe they're embarrassed because they haven't had us in since the time we took 'em to the show."

He would have liked to walk and get the air this night, but it did not cost money to walk. He got into a taxi at the corner. He rode ten blocks and gave the driver a dollar. He wished he could give him more without being thought a sucker.

THE ELLINGS were eating corned beef and cabbage. Amos' arrival caused a pregnant embarrassment. Tim Elling found he was late for a date. Young Kitty wanted to catch an early show at the movies.

Les said, "Suppose you're going out to some swanky spot for dinner, Amos, or we'd offer you pot luck."

Amos said, "I'd like some corned beef, Les."

Mrs. Elling put on a plate, and remembered that she wanted to take some cake to Mrs. Mills down the block. Amos ate in silence. It was the best meal he had eaten in weeks. It tasted like old times. He missed his simple fare. He offered Les a cigar. Les hesitated, finally took one and gazed at the band thoughtfully.

"Guess you kind of wonder why we didn't come to dinner tonight, Amos?"

Amos tried not to show his hurt. "I wondered if you were mad, Les."

Les made curlicues on the tablecloth with a knife. He looked up with a set expression.

"Amos, I might as well put it plain. It isn't that we don't appreciate what you've done for us. I don't know where we'd have gotten the money to pay Tim's tuition at that electrical school, or a good eye specialist for Kitty without you."

Amos waved his hand. "Wasn't anything, Les. We wanted to do it."

Les nodded. "I know you're making enough to do what you want, Amos. But that's the point, see? You're making so much we can't know you any more. It isn't your fault, but that's the way it is."

Amos sucked on his cigar. "I don't see it makes any difference, Les."

"Well, it does!" Les flushed angrily. "Like taking us to the theater that night. Set you back thirty or forty dollars. Amos, that's as much as I make in a week!"

Amos blinked. "Well, what was wrong?"

Les jammed his knife against the table. "Well, for one thing, I can't treat you back the same way."

Amos gazed at his cigar unhappily. "But shucks, you can come over to dinner, same as always."

Les snorted. "Listen, my old lady's still down my neck about that dinner silver you bought for Abigail. Wants to know why I can't get some extra work like you and do the same."

"You could have the silver, if you wanted," Amos said.

Les sat back and stared. "You gone nuts? No, I can see you mean it. But we don't want charity, Amos, and I can't make the kind of money you're making. And as long as I can't and it starts trouble to see you, we're all better off if we just forget about being friends."

Amos studied his cigar ash with misty eyes. Les laid a hand on his shoulder. "It's not just you making money that makes it hard, Amos. It's the way you spend it. You're spending like a man that has a million."

Amos looked at the decided expression in Les' eyes. He muttered feebly, "Well, thanks for telling me," and left.

AMOS WALKED slowly home. A few pretty girls noticed his expensive clothes and eyed him. It would have given him a kick a few weeks before. Now it was just another annoying reminder that he had too much money. He didn't want the attentions of pretty girls. He wanted to enjoy life with Abby, with a little house and a little business and a lot of time, as they had dreamed of twenty years before.

He climbed wearily upstairs. Abby was in the crowded bedroom, crying over which dress she would wear. He looked around the room. His eyes touched on the two porcelain lamps, the

gold-fitted toilet bottles, the French needlepoint chairs, the heavy lace bedspread. There was the bottle of twenty-five-dollar perfume she had not even opened. Everything in there had cost money; and everything in there made it look strange and foreign and less like a home. It looked like a window in Clymer's store.

He said, "Look, Abby, let's not dress. Let's just spend a quiet evening for a change. A bite to eat, and maybe the corner movie if you feel like it."

She turned him a tear-stained face, suddenly natural and pretty with relief. "Oh, Amos, my feet are so tired! Can you eat some canned things?"

He helped her set the table. Seemed kind of funny, all that real silver and the big bowl of glass fruit that had cost nine dollars, for just the two of them. They ate in bedroom slippers. They went to the corner movies. They had a soda afterward. It had been a long time since bed had felt so comfortable.

In the morning, Amos' money had vanished. He went dully through three or four pairs of pants to make sure. He had expected it would be gone, but now that it had happened, he experienced all the sensations of having lost it. Seemed like all this money had done was cause him a lot of trouble. He hadn't even bought the meerschaum pipe. If it had been ninety dollars, he might have. But somehow, there had always been some little thing that busted up an even hundred.

VI.

Twice that morning, Amos caught Flanagan regarding him thoughtfully. He gave a submissive, friendly smile. Flanagan nodded and turned away, shaking his head a bit.

"Wonder if he's in trouble and needs some money," Amos thought. "Maybe he doesn't like to ask a subordinate for a loan."

He would have liked to give Flanagan money if he needed it. The chief was about the only friend he had left. Louis Seidt, who even sponged matches as his inalienable right, had called him a nitwit to another worker in the washroom. It had hurt Amos, to hear that. All he had done was buy Louis a once-a-week season ticket to the ball games.

Isobel Walsh, who had a hard time of it supporting an old mother, had reported to the office with flaming face that "That lecherous old Johnson was trying to undermine my virtue with gifts of lavish jewelry. That kind of jewelry from a man has only one meaning!" she said darkly.

Amos glanced at the respectable Miss Walsh's puckberry face, and cringed.

Finally, even Angus Gilly had concluded Amos was crazy. A man, Angus announced regretfully, who went around buying dollar boxes of cigars for another man was either up to something, or he was "pixilated." In any event, he was to be shunned. "And it hurts me to say it," Angus said mournfully, with a glance at one of the last of Amos' good cigars.

Amos went out to lunch, reaching in his pocket for the crisp hundred-dollar note as usual. He stopped dead and paled. His hands went nervously through every pocket. He pulled his pockets inside out. He picked bits of fuzz out of the empty corners. There was no hundred-dollar bill.

He walked around the block, thinking that maybe it was too early. He thought about a new curry he had heard Mr. Tillson mention. Rike's served it. It was the most expensive restaurant

IT'S EASY TO PUT THIS *New 1941* *Midwest* IN YOUR OWN CABINET

FACTORY TO YOU

SAVE UP TO 50%

30 DAYS TRIAL

EASY TERMS

14-TUBES *with*

AMAZING FOREIGN RECEPTION

FREQUENCY MODULATION

AND TELEVISION PROVISION

Only $19.95

COMPLETE CHASSIS WITH TUBES AND SPEAKER

NOW, you can enjoy the mighty power of a 14-Tube radio, at the amazingly low, factory-to-you price of only $19.95. Brilliant performance. Beautiful tone. Now tune in broadcasts *direct* from distant overseas stations. Our famous 30-day prove-it-yourself plan, fully protects you and enables you to prove Midwest's super performance in the privacy of your own home, without obligation.

USERS SAY:

"Wouldn't Trade For Any Other Radio"

Milwaukee, Wis. —I wouldn't trade my Midwest for any other radio. It is my second Midwest and it is improved a lot, especially the foreign stations like Italy, France, Spain, England, and Germany, etc. — S. Caplan.

"Voices and Singing Crystal Clear"

Bethlehem, Pa. —So crystal clear and natural that one would think the person speaking or singing was right in the living room. Foreign stations come in so clear, almost like any station in the U. S. A.— Mr. and Mrs. W. Frenk.

YOU BE THE JUDGE

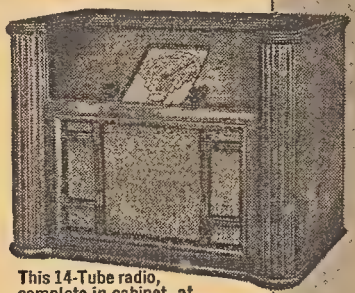
No high pressure salesmen are needed to urge you to keep a Midwest—its performance speaks for itself. Do like thousands have done—put this new 1941 chassis in your present cabinet. Other chassis and cabinet models are fully pictured and described in our new 1941 Factory-To-You, money-saving catalog . . . from 5 to 17 Tubes, and up to 5-Wave Bands . . . including Radio-Phonograph combinations and Home Recorders.

BRINGS IN WORLD NEWS DIRECT

Tune in broadcasts direct from foreign countries. Hear history in the making before it appears in your local paper, and, before your local station announces its own version of the news! Listen direct to distant overseas stations in remotest parts of the globe.

14-TUBE CABINET MODEL

$29.95 COMPLETE



This 14-Tube radio, complete in cabinet, at a price you would ordinarily pay for a set with only 7 to 10 tubes.

FILL IN COUPON AND MAIL TODAY OR JUST SEND YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS ON A POSTCARD

FREE RADIO CATALOG

RUSH COUPON FOR FREE CATALOG ON COMPLETE LINE OF 5 TO 17-TUBE MODELS

MIDWEST *Factory-to-You* RADIOS

MANUFACTURERS OF QUALITY RADIOS SINCE 1920

Midwest Radio Corporation
Cincinnati, Ohio, U. S. A.
Dept. 42-AA

Send me your new FREE Catalog, complete details of your liberal 30-day Trial offer and factory-to-you prices.

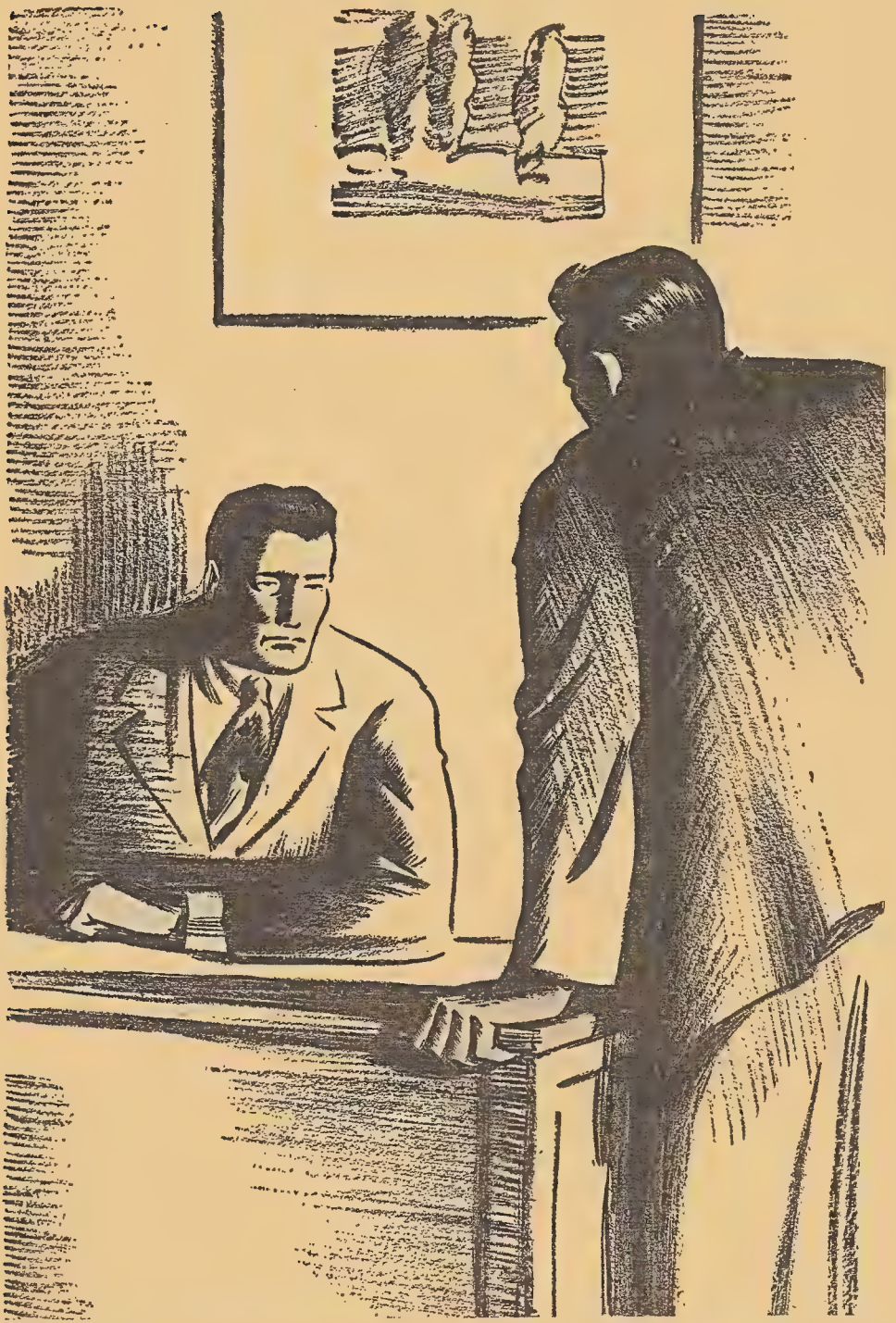
*Name*_____

*Address*_____

*Town*_____ *State*_____

User-Agents Make Easy Extra Money. Check here ( ) for details.

GET MIDWEST'S ANSWER TO TRADE-INS!



"You've had considerable wealth that you don't seem to be able to account for. And with this racket exposed—I'm afraid I'll have to let you go."

in the district. But when he got in front of Rike's, his pocket was still empty.

He couldn't believe it. It was more incredible than the first time he found the hundred-dollar bill there, or the first time the money vanished. He was used to having money there when he wanted to do something expensive! He felt annoyed, and very much put out.

Joe Kane came along the street and grinned. "Where's the millionaire eating today?"

Amos looked at him dazedly. "I don't know. Guess I don't eat, Joe. I'm broke."

Joe laughed, *"Yeah!"* He looked at Amos and said, "Oh, ya mean it!"

Joe shuffled with embarrassment. "I only got six bits, Amos. I could blow you to the coffeepot, but I guess you wouldn't want to eat there."

Amos beamed. The coffeepot! It would be like old home week.

But it wasn't like old home week. He had never noticed it before, but the place had a greasy smell. It was hot and noisy, and the food was half cold, steamed, and badly cooked. And the coffee was rank! Gosh, how he missed good coffee!

He kept reaching in his pocket all afternoon. His pocket remained empty. It was still empty at quitting time, although he wracked his brains for foolish things to do that cost money. He even mumbled the ideas over to himself.

AMOS WALKED home for the first time in weeks. It was rather pleasant, but his mind was preoccupied with his loss. There was not anything particular that he wanted to do, but he kept thinking of the things he might have wanted to do. And he was out of cigarettes. He missed that money.

He went over to a little park near their house. He sat down and watched the dirty-faced, squalid children. He looked down at the tips of his new shoes. They hurt his feet, but they looked good, except they should have been shined that day. Be kind of tough, not having a fresh shine and barber's shave every day. The shoe man and the barber always asked him about politics and business.

Well, it looked like all the fuss and worry over spending was finished. He guessed he was glad; but he didn't feel glad. He felt like he had lost a fortune. He wondered what Abby would say when he told her his outside work was over.

He went home planning the way he would tell her. He found her weeping over the table. But not the quelled, self-pitying weeps of lately. There was a good deal of the old rage in the shake of her shoulders.

"And now *this!*" she howled, and flung her hand atop the evening paper.

He looked at the usual headlines; war in Europe; murder on Long Island; society girl smacks movie actress; sensational new evidence in the numbers racket cleanup. The police said that undoubtedly the books had been kept by an accountant familiar with the most advanced corporate accounting methods.

He looked all over the front page again, then asked, "What are you crying about?"

"You!" she choked. "Every paper in town will track you down! Amos Johnson, the racket bookkeeper! And what will they find? With all the millions you've been making, you kept your wife a prisoner in this hovel!"

Amos shook his head. "But, Abby, I'm not the racket bookkeeper. Any-

way, this isn't a hovel. You used to think it was a pretty nice flat!"

"Oh!" she sobbed. "Liar, thief, bluebeard! And now a racketeer! Don't speak to me!" He hadn't moved, but she drew sharply away with loathing and disgust.

He felt dully uneasy. He began to wonder if maybe he had been keeping the books for the numbers racket and didn't know it. A kind of Jekyll and Hyde.

He went downstairs and embarrassedly borrowed a dollar from Tony. Tony flipped the evening paper onto the sofa as he came in. He gave him the dollar readily enough, but his manner was constrained. He started to edge into talk about the numbers racket.

"Tony, your mouth she is too bigger every day!" Maria said sharply.

Tony fell silent. Amos colored to his ears and went out. He walked uptown, stopping to look in the window of that pipe store. The hundred-dollar meerschaum was still there. Gee, he wished he had bought that while the money lasted!

Going home, he planned the way he would broach the subject of no more spending to Abigail. Maybe she would have cried herself into better humor by this time. But Abigail was in bed, and feigning sleep. He could tell from the way her jaw was clenched that this was no time to talk about anything.

FLANAGAN called him in next afternoon. The chief gestured to a chair and flipped open a box of cigarettes. He tapped the desk a few times with a paper knife and gazed out the window. He looked at Amos abruptly.

He said, "Amos, it's not easy to say this, but you're discontinued, effective immediately."

Amos stared. "Sacked?"

"No," Flanagan said carefully, *"discontinued.* You get full severance pay for twenty-three years good service. I don't mind telling you, you will be missed. You're the best worker we have, and I will give you any kind of recommendation you want."

Amos swallowed. "Gosh, Mr. Flanagan, what have I done wrong?"

Flanagan's jaw hardened with annoyance. "Nothing, Amos. But some of the brass hats think they know more about departments than the department chiefs. This is a front-office order."

Amos shook his head, bewildered.

Flanagan got up and slapped his back. "You'll get another job before long. I'll see to it, myself. But I'd like to give you a little tip, Amos."

Amos looked up miserably.

Flanagan said, "Don't throw your private money around on your next job. Those things get back to the bigwigs. It makes them nervous to have workers with a lot of private money. And then something comes up, like this numbers racket, and they get some very funny ideas."

"Gosh!" Amos gasped. "I didn't have anything to do with that!"

Flanagan smiled grimly. "I know it. I had you followed weeks ago to find out for myself. But the front office is nervous about you, and that ends it. Maybe this sixteen-hundred-dollar check will ease the firing."

Flanagan was muttering savagely against bosses when Amos' slow steps carried him out of the office. He sat down at his desk and automatically finished his day's work. He could have packed up and left right then, but the other clerks would see him going out and know what had happened.

Well, he had a year's pay. He could

bank it, and look around for a few weeks. They would have to pull their living expenses down to minimum, but if he could get another job before the end of a year, he would be in money. He knew Flanagan had fought for that severance money for him.

AMOS STUMBLED wearily into the house that night. He had never been a very strong man in times of doubt, but now he felt abashed and outright weak. He needed mothering. He needed Abby's understanding and comforting, even if it took the form of a verbal typhoon.

Abby sat watching the door with hard eyes. Nothing he could say would fire her kindness until she was over this mood. He couldn't remember seeing her in such cold fury ever before in his life. Not even over the apartment he refused to take.

Her voice ripped across his battered nerves like a file. "I might have known you were trying to enslave me when you stole my forty dollars that night, and kept me penniless all these weeks. But *this!*" She made a face of unutterable disgust.

He sat down and made designs on the table spread. He couldn't quite make it out at first. Abby accused him of stealing credit slips from Meyer's and Clymer's and Daniels. What credit slips, he wondered? Her voice grew harder and grimmer.

"Too mean," she said scornfully, "to even let me save toward a little place for our old age! It wasn't like I was trying to get that money for myself. You knew it was for that little house

You've got a shaving treat in store—
Try Thin Gillettes—ten cents for four!
They whisk through stubble extra quick—
You look well-groomed—your face feels slick!
New kind of edges on steel hard enough to cut glass!
THIN
Gillette
BLADES
4 for 10¢
8 for 19¢
The Thin Gillette Blade Is Produced By The Maker Of The Famous Gillette Blue Blade

the true life story of our greatest baseball player

LOU GEHRIG

TOLD in pictures for the first time. Every picture, every incident, approved by Lou Gehrig himself.

It's the story of an American boy who struggled to get what he wanted —the greatest story of baseball ever told.

118 pictures of Lou Gehrig's life and 4 other features.

SPORT COMICS

ON SALE EVERYWHERE 10c A COPY

we wanted on a little piece of ground beside a lake. But no, you wouldn't let me have that much security and freedom. You stole the credit slips and connived with those stores to deny giving them!"

He began to see light. She had managed to get rebate slips on a percentage of their wild spending. And the slips had disappeared. They would, of course. They were the same as savings.

"And even my woolen undies you know I wear in winter!" Her voice cracked. She nearly sobbed at that. It seemed the most heinous of his crimes. "Not even woolen undies!" she quavered.

He said, "Woolen undies? What were you buying them in midsummer for?"

She glared at him with reproach. "Oh, not because it meant anything to me. But just to save a brute husband's money when I saw them on sale!"

She put a frayed handkerchief to her mouth. "But you wouldn't even let me have those! You found them, and threw them out!" She suddenly began to cry. "Amos, I don't know what I've done, that you're treating me like this! About the only thing you've left me is that you're working honest and steady, even if you are a secret crook beside!"

He would have liked to have taken her in his arms, and tell her all his troubles and the true story. But it was hopeless. She would just think he was lying some more. He couldn't even tell her he had been sacked.

He went out gloomily at his usual time next morning. He wondered how you looked for a job. He had known, once; but that was twenty-three years before. Not many companies liked to take on men of his advancing years.

He banked his money, determined to

draw out exactly what his weekly pay had been. He went to the employment agencies. He was tired by noon, and his feet hurt brutally from the new shoes. He went into a cafeteria for lunch. The check left a dime out of Tony's dollar. He hesitated, then bought a pack of his old cigarettes. It was extravagant, and they tasted rank to his spoiled senses, but he needed a smoke, waiting around those offices.

NEAR FIVE, Amos had a stroke of luck. An agency had a call for a night bookkeeper at a garage uptown. He was to be there at nine o'clock that night. Amos had never realized that "uptown" could be so far. He walked up along the park, and then miles through a wilderness of tenement and warehouse sections. His feet were killing him now. He felt nearly dead with fatigue. His stomach was hollow, and his mind was numb.

He got to the garage at eight thirty, and sat on a bench in a lonely office. His eyes kept closing, heavily. It was hot, and his mind dozed. He kept jerking awake, but it was no use. His lids were weighted with lead. He felt suddenly relaxed and infinitely comfortable. He knew he should open his eyes, but he simply could not. Nothing, not even a job, seemed to matter that much.

He was shaken violently awake. He blinked blearily at a heavy-set, dominant-featured man. He could see the man's face coming in waves into his dazed, sleep-ridden senses.

The man said, "The night bookkeeper, eh?" and laughed at somebody in the shadows.

Amos tried to get up and talk. He staggered. His legs were numb and his feet were on fire. His tongue was too thick to make words right. And he was still half asleep.

The man watched him and laughed. Amos saw him shaking his head. His impersonal voice rolled out. "Well, maybe you're not drunk," the man was saying. "I'll have to take your word on that. But you're no man for a night job anyway." And then the man was gone.

Amos groped for a cigarette, and staggered painfully down the endless, dim-lit streets. He had to stop more and more often. Twice, he sat down in doorways and considered spending the night there. But the tramp of cops brought him to his feet and hobbling furtively along.

Here and there in the park, he could make out people who had flocked out of the tenement sections to spend the hot night where there was air. He debated a long time. He thought of his cave, but that was too far away. But it just didn't seem like he could keep going much longer.

With a furtive air, he turned into a path. He walked a long way farther than necessary. But his tired eyes were looking for a secluded nook without a "Keep Off The Grass" sign.

He found one, and curled on a random newspaper beneath a bush. It was chilly on the ground and creepy out there in the open. But the relief of getting his shoes off was worth the penalty for murder or being murdered. Amos slept.

A SHAKE on the shoulder awakened Amos. He stared into the whiskered face of a very wise individual who turned out to be one Phillip Augustus Tingle. Mr. Tingle, it appeared, knew about cops. He knew a great deal about them, including the fact that sleeping denizens of the park would be

brutally aroused by a nightstick rapping on their feet in a very few minutes.

Amos stretched, and felt sore, and regarded his shoes morosely. Mr. Tingle had on nice shoes—old and softened in the creases. He appeared in addition to be kind of psychic. When Amos complained about his feet, Mr. Tingle magnanimously suggested a swap.

There was a little section of a pond discreetly hidden from the patrol beat where Mr. Tingle led Amos to wash. He showed additional and surprising knowledge. He jerked out Amos' coat so that it looked almost neat. He smoothed his tie for him, showed him a fresh spot on his handkerchief to leave exposed from his pocket, and taught him how to adjust his collar so that the dirty crease of the previous day was unexposed to view.

Other bewhiskered gentry appeared for their morning toilet. Out of pockets and pieces of paper, a breakfast came into being. Amos eyed it miserably. He, alone, had nothing to contribute toward the general pot. He thought about his watch, but that seemed suddenly to hold great value.

Mr. Tingle considered his new friend's problem. "It's a rule," he said. "No duff, no share. Hm-m-m. Would you possibly have a reasonably long cigarette, sir?"

Amos pulled out his crumpled pack. Eight cigarettes remained. The hostility of Mr. Tingle's friends vanished like mist. Amos was relieved of his cigarettes, all eight, and allowed to partake of something passing as coffee, and something passing as stew. He found the morning well along before the colorful band dispersed to their day's work. He left Mr. Tingle with regret, and minus his watch, which he did not know.

He had never had such an experience, and he thought about it with pleasant excitement on the way home. He was nearing his neighborhood when somebody tugged at his arm.

A silvery voice gurgled, "Hello, Amos!"

It was the dazzling girl who had taken Miss McElroy's place. She looked startlingly pretty in a silly little hat and clinging dress, smart and perky for all its low cost. Amos beamed, and felt embarrassed.

The girl laughed and shook a finger at him. "You've been making a night of it, Amos!"

"Well, sort of," he confessed, and felt pretty wicked.

She glanced around nervously and drew him into a secluded doorway. She said, "Look, I'm scared stiff. I'm going to meet the boy I'm going to marry, in that drugstore two blocks from your house. And I've got five hundred dollars on me."

Amos said, "Gosh!"

The girl nodded. "You're darned right, 'gosh,' if I don't get it there! We won't be able to get married. Look, you're used to carrying money. Would you carry it over for me, like a lamb?"

Amos would have conquered Olympus for a friendly smile like that. Real friendly. He wished he had bought her a wedding present before his money stopped coming.

They got to the drugstore and stood in the doorway laughing. So she had quit her job, and they were going away that morning to be married and live in the country. Amos glowed all over with happiness just because she was happy.

He took out her money and counted it over carefully.

She said: "You're a darling, Amos!"

and threw her arms around his neck to give him a young, happy kiss. Woman-like, she held the money in one hand while she kissed him. She said, all bright-eyed and flustered: "Wish me luck!"

Amos said fervently: "I do!"

He went down the street, whistling. Gosh, that was like the way Abby felt when—

"Oh-h-h-h-h!" he thought sharply. "Abby! What am I going to tell her?"

He cut his pace and went furtively along, eyes darting into stores to see if he could spot her. Maybe the best thing was just to march right in. If she were home, he would say he had been working all night on inventory. That had happened two or three times. He ducked into Sammy's cigar store to charge a pack of cigarettes and steel himself for the suspicious cross-questioning which was sure to follow.

An ominous sound of banging furniture came from Amos' flat. He fought down fears and went in. Abby regarded him with sheer cold outrage. No tears. No quivering chin. It was an utterly unpierceable bitterness.

Her voice was not high and sharp this morning. It was low, and savagely slow.

Amos mumbled: "Got an all-night check-up on inventory, Abby. I would have telephoned, but it was too late by the time I knew how long it would last."

She glared at him with hard, blazing eyes. "I saw the check-up," she announced. "I saw you kissing the hussy good-by—and right here under my very nose!"

He gaped.

She pointed toward his shoes. "Don't try to lie, Amos Johnson! Those aren't the shoes you wore out of here yesterday! I see it all now—keeping some little gang moll in luxury and trying to pull the wool over my eyes with your miserly spending! Why, that must have been twenty thousand dollars, that stack of money you counted out to her!"

Amos fidgeted and watched her slamming things into suitcases. He went out suddenly to find the girl. She had left the drugstore, but the clerk had heard her mention the Grand Central Station to her boy friend.

Amos ransacked his pockets for a nickel, found nothing, and set out afoot. For two hours he haunted the crowds at the station without trace of the girl. He walked miserably home.

The apartment was strewn with hurried packing, and quiet. It had never been so quiet. There was a note on the table, scathing and curt. Abby had gone home to her mother's.

VII.

Amos spent days walking around the flat, touching the things they had bought together, staring at the shelves loaded with delicacies. He would go into the bedroom and stare at Abigail's empty closet. The little automatic light went on when he opened the door, and the silver stars gleamed from the blue paper she had lined the closet with.

He felt dazed, and deserted, and alone. He would have felt no more alone on a desert isle.

He thought about sending Abby that money in the bank, but she would just think that was another lie. He sent her all but five dollars of what his pay had been each Saturday. He wrote long notes, asking her to come back. The money orders, she kept, but the letters came back with his mother-in-law's

crabbed writing: "Abigail does not wish to hear from you."

He had never thought life could be so useless and desolate. And there just was no way of straightening things out. Abigail refused to even speak to him on the telephone.

It was Tony who suggested the bold move of going up and battering in the mother-in-law's door. "Maybe her head, too, a little," Tony scowled.

Amos set out with determination. It waned a little as the subway stations flashed by. It vanished when the sharp visage of his mother-in-law appeared in the doorway. But she let him in. She had a few things she wanted to say, she announced meaningly.

The few things included most of the more heinous and macaber crimes a husband could commit. But they all led up to one point: he could not expect Abigail to go back to poverty after the reckless way he had taught her—almost beaten her!—into spending.

Amos went home feeling like a werewolf, or some equally terrible monster. He considered again sending Abby the money in the bank. But years of budgeting and auditing stood aghast at that idea. What if she took that money and spent it overnight—as they had been spending? They would be left with no income and without a dime!

He wandered out into the warm summer evening, comfortable in an old pair of shoes. He walked up Broadway, and saw his pipe still in the window. Gosh, that pipe would just about be broken in now if he had bought it when he first had money.

He found himself in the park, and wandered automatically toward his rock. He sat down in his accustomed place. There was a light breeze blowing, and it felt cool upon his brow.

He looked up suddenly to see the stranger of that afternoon ages before. He felt thankful the man was there. He could talk to this man. He could tell him the story. He did.

"Maybe you won't believe it," he finished.

The stranger played with his stones. They made a circle of shadow against the darkening sky. "Oh, it seems highly possible!"

Amos looked at him with a sense of great relief. "Mister, do you think the tommyknocker put that money in my pocket?"

The man grinned. "Somebody put it there! Of course, you broke your agreement with the tommyknocker. You tried not spending all of the money."

Amos shook his head. "Mister, I didn't know how hard it was!" He extended a ten-cent pack of cigarettes. "I'd sure know what to do with it now, though! I'd sure like to get it back."

The man cupped his hand and the stones landed one after the other with hard little clicks. "You might get another chance. You sure you could spend it this time?"

Amos said: "I've got a list of foolish things that would take a year's money! I guess I just never thought of spending on the wrong things before." He flicked his cigarette butt into the dark. "Mister, I got to get that money back! I've got to get my wife!"

"Tell me about your book," the man said suddenly.

Amos told. They talked until very late. The city was nearly quiet when Amos walked home.

Amos got up in the morning and stared at his pants with woebegone foolishness. Of course, the money

wouldn't be there. But, gee, it would mean a lot if it was!

He reached into his money pocket with a funny kind of expectancy. A crisp bank note crinkled under his hand. Amos gazed at it and yelled. He had never yelled before in his grown-up life.

He tore into his clothes and raced out before the stores were open. He was the first customer at the florist. He was the first at the candy store. He was the first at the jeweler.

He bombarded Abigail with presents and charge slips. They all came back. At first, with curt notes from his mother-in-law that Abby wanted none of his sin-streaked money. But finally, with a note that Abigail was acting very harshly about all this. It was breaking the old lady's heart to see all that silverware and jewelry going to waste.

But he knew the iron in Abby's nature. Not even her own mother could talk her into reason when she set out to be stubborn. All that she would take was his weekly "pay." It would have been something, at least, if she had just kept the presents.

He walked dismally up Broadway and looked again at the meerschaum pipe. He had an unbroken hundred dollars, and he could buy it now. It looked awful nice. It would be something just to watch the pipe deepen in color, all uneven and interesting, and shadowing those figures of the death dance.

"But gee," he thought, "I couldn't go and buy something like that for myself when Abby isn't keeping anything."

He passed on by the shop. He did not know what to do about his money now. He did not want to lose it again.

OLD MR. BOSTON SAYS: "YOU'LL AGREE MY APRICOT NECTAR IS TOPS!"

IT'S SMOOTH, IT'S RICH, IT GOES DOWN SLICK
IT GIVES YOUR TASTE A BRAND NEW "KICK!"
IF YOU WANT FRIENDS TO SAY YOU'RE SWELL, HERE'S THE DRINK THAT "RINGS THE BELL!"
OLD Mr. BOSTON
APRICOT NECTAR
A BEVERAGE LIQUEUR

Here's the luscious flavor of ripe apricots in a rich, hearty liquor! Drink Mr. Boston's Apricot Nectar straight. A handy drinking cup tops each pint bottle. You'll agree it's "rich as brandy, smooth as honey!"

A Beverage Liqueur prepared by Ben-Burk, Inc., Boston, Mass.

OLD MR. BOSTON APRICOT NECTAR

ALSO BLACKBERRY · PEACH · WILD CHERRY—70 PROOF

BECOME AN EXPERT

BOOKKEEPER

New, *better* bookkeeping opportunities opening every day. Jobs that pay well—and lead to still better jobs. We train you to get them—and keep them! Previous training not necessary. C.P.A. instructors cover everything from the ground up. Inexpensive. Write for free book and special terms. No obligation. Address:

LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 965-H Chicago, Ill.
A Correspondence Institution

FREE! $6.00 Full Size FOOD & HOUSEHOLD PRODUCT ASST.

SEND NO MONEY! Rush name and address for big Assortment of FOODS, GROCERIES, SOAPS, ETC.,—full size packages, worth $6.00. Yours ABSOLUTELY FREE! Show these products to friends, neighbors. Take orders for sensational values, more than 200 quality products used in every home. Earn big profits, full or spare time. No experience necessary. Write for FREE $6.00 Assortment of Products NOW. ZANOL, 1891 Monmouth, Cincinnati, Ohio.

ANY PHOTO ENLARGED

Size 3 x 10 inches or smaller if desired. Same price for full length or bust form, groups, landscapes, pet animals, etc., or enlargements of any part of group picture. Safe return of original photo guaranteed. **47c** 3 for $1.00

SEND NO MONEY Just mail photo or snapshot (any size) and within a week you will receive your beautiful enlargement, guaranteed fadeless. Pay postman 47c plus postage—or send 49c with order and we pay postage. Big 16x20-inch enlargement sent C.O.D. 79c plus postage or send 80c and we pay postage. Take advantage of this amazing offer now. Send your photos today. Specify size wanted.

STANDARD ART STUDIOS, 113 S. Jefferson St., Dept. 770-L, Chicago

It was about all he had left to think about. But spending a hundred dollars a day was going to be a terribly hard job when there wasn't anybody to spend it on. And it just looked like every time he tried to do something nice for anyone, he got in more trouble.

He walked on toward his cave, thinking miserably of all his woes. Gosh, if he had a job, at least that would be something. But he couldn't even get a job. He guessed he was just finished.

"Washed up at forty-three," he thought miserably. "And not one darned thing I ever did to make it matter!"

A bronzed young man was signaling through a transit in front of the cave. He grinned at Amos.

"Late," he explained. "This tunnel should have gone through three weeks ago. But the rock offered unexpected difficulties."

Amos looked at the place where he had carved his initials. *"A tunnel!"* he thought with rage. Those initials were the single, solitary mark he had made upon the world. Now they would be gone.

"I used to play cops and robbers here," Amos said.

The young fellow offered a cigarette. "So did I! Kind of hate to see this old cave busted up. Funny. You know, it was prowling around inside this rock I got interested in engineering."

Amos sat down. A crazy idea was popping in his head. He said: "Wonder how much it would cost to get the pieces of this rock carted somewhere?"

The engineer laughed. "Plenty! Cost a hundred dollars a day just to haul it."

Amos gulped. "Gee, I could pay that!"

The engineer chuckled. The chuckle ended in mid-note. He looked at Amos

oddly. "Say, you serious? Where would you put it?"

Amos hadn't thought about that. He didn't have any place to put it. If he had that little five acres beside a lake that Abby had wanted, he could take it there. But he didn't.

The engineer shouted to somebody out of sight and sat down. "Say, look here, a lot of people get screwy ideas like this. I'd almost do it myself if I had the money. I haven't. But I got a place, a little five acres up in the Connecticut hills, that you could buy for a song. It's right on a lake, and the property's valuable."

Amos looked at him.

The engineer said: "I'm no philanthropist. This property is worth a thousand an acre. But I'd let you have it for two hundred and fifty dollars."

"Why?" Amos popped the word without thinking.

The engineer laughed. "Why, the publicity of taking this up there would make a big farm I'm stuck with worth a fortune! I'd even go up and reconstruct the cave for nothing."

Amos' life began to move very rapidly. He could buy that place with the money in the bank. The engineer would build a little house at cost. He could move the rock. And he could give the place to Abigail. She would find some way of making ends meet. What happened to him afterward didn't matter.

THE ENGINEER managed the whole business. Amos would go up and watch them moving the rock out, the young fellow having the time of his life with the special work. It had started as a rough idea, but now that the engineer was in it, he was taken with a kind of fever. He was going to reconstruct the cave with the same sections of rock which had originally formed it.

Amos would look at the daily crowds with a sheepish grin. He wondered when the publicity would start. It might make Abigail think twice when she saw his picture in the paper.

But the first story was not what he expected. The headline said: "Nut Cracks Rock." And they didn't take Amos' picture.

He felt pretty bitter over that. He stopped going to the park. He was going to mope at home. But moping all by himself in an empty apartment grew a little wearisome. He got out his manuscript with a sullen restlessness. He might as well finish it up, put on the last chapter now. Then he'd burn it. But first he wanted to finish it. It put a sort of period to his existence.

He flipped through the pages. Wasn't bad reading, at that! He had never thought about it, but it wouldn't make a half-bad book. He was chuckling over the story when Mr. Bo Murk arrived.

Mr. Murk was a feature writer for the *Daily Times,* the rival sheet of the paper which had printed the first story on the rock. Furthermore, Mr. Murk was quite incensed about it. The *Reporter* had scooped him on a swell human-interest yarn.

"They didn't need to call me a nut!" Amos complained. "Gosh, can't a fellow do something that means something to him without being crazy?"

Bo Murk agreed as his pencil raced. He was very curious over where the money was coming from. Amos had not meant to tell him, but he did. Murk regarded him brightly.

He said: "Say, Johnson, you're a natural born yarn spinner! You're in the wrong business. You ought to be a writer."

"Do you think so?" Amos asked confidentially. "Funny, you saying that, and being a writer yourself. I been sort of playing around with the idea."

He showed the reporter the book. Mr. Murk started to glance through it with a broad, superior smile. His mouth fell. His eyes grew peculiarly intent.

He looked at Amos suspiciously. "Say, what kind of a publicity stunt is going on here?"

Amos beamed and chuckled. He told him about the engineer's property.

Murk's sardonic grin turned to amazement. "You mean you don't—" He studied Amos. "Listen, don't you move out of here until I get back, and don't answer the door to anybody!"

He came back in one hour flat, a large, florid gentleman named Griggs, and a bottle of something, with him. Mr. Griggs was a not-easy-to-impress publisher. He glanced around superiorly.

He said: "Bo, I think you've got me on a herring trail. No piece of literature was ever written in an apartment like this!"

Murk said: "Keep quiet. I just brought you to read and listen. Mr. Johnson, have a drink."

Amos colored. "I don't drink, Mr. Murk."

Murk grinned. "Fine. Great! Try this."

"This" knocked the air from Amos' lungs and did a great deal to unhinge his tongue. He had another and got well into his sad tale. Murk was making voluminous notes and grinning. Mr. Griggs drank slowly, smiled with amusement, and flipped over the pages of Amos' manuscript without paying much attention to them. Murk went out and got another bottle. They had almost finished that, and Amos still talked.

He sniffled. "I ask you fellows, what can you . . . *hic!* . . . *dohic!* . . . when your own wife won't believe you?"

Murk tried to suppress his chuckles. He nudged Griggs. "I can't see why she wouldn't believe him, can you, H. D.?"

Mr. Griggs looked at Murk with an absorbed stare. He said: "Huh?" Then he said: "Shut up. I'm reading."

IT WAS DAWN, and another bottle later, when Griggs eyed the inert form of Amos snoring in his chair. He interrupted Mr. Murk's random drawings. He demanded: "How long could you keep this yarn running on the first break?"

Murk gave him a shrewd glance. "There's a better way of putting it."

Griggs scowled. "And they called Jesse James a robber!"

Murk lit a cigarette and considered. "Two hundred a day if it's syndicated wouldn't be bad."

Griggs swore, pompously and valiantly. He growled: "It's a holdup! You'll make a series good for six days!"

Murk bowed. "I accept the compliment. In six days, every newspaper reader in America will know that Amos Johnson has written a screwball book and that you are publishing it."

Griggs said: "O. K., if we can wake him up and get him to sign this. I'll put my press agent in his vest pocket. How about the follow-up?"

Murk shrugged. "Easy. Race off your first edition. It will take a few weeks to reconstruct the cave. We play up the sad love plight of this benighted liar and kill the story. When the cave's

finished, we pick the story up again. He meets his wife outside the rock, just where he proposed to her twenty-three years before. We've performed a human service. Hearts and flowers."

"Very nice," Griggs agreed. "Except, from what he says, his wife won't be there! Who's going to get her?"

"Oh, I guess I can," Murk grinned. "This bird lost her because he's an unprofessional dreamer; what he needs is a good professional liar, like me. She'll believe a lie where she won't the truth."

Griggs swore some more and shook Amos awake. "Sign here," he said. "It's a very good contract. Highest percentage possible, two thousand dollars advance, and the rights to your next six books."

Amos blinked and held his head. "You believe me?" he faltered.

Griggs coughed and said: "Of course!"

"I dunno," Amos mumbled doubtfully. "I dunno if I could write a book.

Griggs exploded: "Holy socks!" He stared at Amos. "Listen. You've got what fifty million people want. You've got the ability to dream. And you've got what fifty thousand writers would give their eyeteeth for. You can make other people dream with you!"

Amos felt very sick. He said: "I don't like to sign anything without talking with Abby. And she won't talk with me."

Griggs arose to his full impressiveness. "Mr. Johnson, a woman will forgive anything in a writer. You let us handle this for you and we'll get your wife back."

"Gee! Promise?" Amos whispered.

"Promise!" Griggs assured him.

"If it's on a stretcher," Murk said under his breath.

"What do you think? Has he got a

THINK OF YOUR FUTURE

AND GET INTO

ELECTRICITY

TRAIN FOR YOUR

START IN THIS

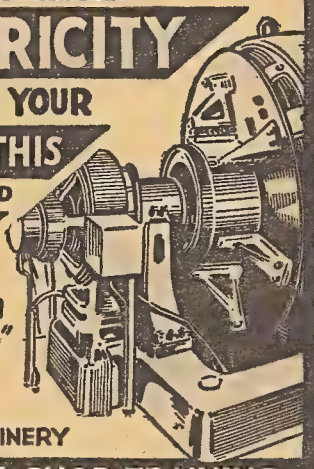
GROWING FIELD

A QUICKER

EASIER

WAY "LEARN BY DOING"

ACTUAL WORK ON ACTUAL ELECTRICAL MACHINERY



12 WEEKS SHOP TRAINING

PAY AFTER GRADUATION

If you are not getting ahead—if your dreams for the future are not panning out and you really want to get ahead — quit dreaming and do something about it. Get into a field where the opportunities are great and better salaries are paid. Get into Electricity.

The huge billion dollar Electrical Industry is full of opportunities for men and young men who are prepared to take advantage of them. Build the foundation for a better job or a business of your own in this growing field by training. You must be trained to get ahead.

The famous Coyne Shops in Chicago can train you for your start in only 12 weeks — NOT by home study BUT ON REAL ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT and you "Learn by Doing".

YOU DON'T NEED PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

You don't need previous experience—you don't need advanced education. At Coyne you are trained on real motors, dynamos, generators.

You wind armatures, do house wiring, operate switchboards, work on electric refrigeration and air conditioning equipment, farm lighting plants, automobile ignition and many other branches of Electricity.

EXTRA 4 WEEKS RADIO COURSE INCLUDED

Right now along with my regular Electrical Course I am including an Extra 4 Weeks Radio Course at no extra tuition charge.

"PAY AFTER GRADUATION" PLAN

I have a plan to help ambitious fellows who are short of money for their tuition. On this plan you can get your training first—then pay for most of it later in 12 monthly payments starting 5 months after you start school, or 60 days after your training period.

SEND THE COUPON FOR MY BIG FREE CATALOG AND ALL THE FACTS—TODAY!

H. C. LEWIS, President

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL

500 S. Paulina St. Dept. 60-45 CHICAGO

MAIL COUPON TODAY

H. C. LEWIS, PRESIDENT,
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
500 S. PAULINA ST. DEPT. 60-45
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Please send me your big free catalog and all the facts about Coyne Training and about your Extra 4 Weeks Radio Course.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....

GET YOUR BODY OUT OF THE DUMPS

Stimulate Digestion Build Up Vitality

Feel down in the dumps? Lack your old PEP? Have frequent slight digestive upsets? Then—if there is nothing organically wrong with you—SLUGGISH DIGESTION may have you down. It can give you heartburn, gas, a dizzy head.

Don't resort to harsh laxatives or drugs for sluggish digestion. START those slow DIGESTIVE JUICES FLOWING FASTER. Set the millions of tiny cells of Fleischmann's live Yeast to work on these digestive-juice glands. This yeast is a STIMULATOR. It starts digestive juices flowing faster. In test cases digestion was greatly increased. Eat Fleischmann's Yeast regularly. Two cakes a day—one first thing in the morning, one a half hour before supper. See if you don't begin to FEEL LIKE A MILLION. Write today for "You Can't Feel Well If Digestive Juices Are Failing," F. Y. Co., Dept. H-O, 691 Washington St., New York. Absolutely FREE.

Copyright, 1940, Standard Brands Incorporated

• YOU CAN TRAIN TO **Be an ARTIST**

Trained Artists Are Capable of Earning $30, $50, $75 Weekly. Many of our graduates are now enjoying successful Art careers. Our practical method makes it fun to learn Commercial Art, Cartooning and Designing AT HOME IN SPARE TIME. Write for details in FREE BOOK, "Art for Pleasure and Profit", explains course and describes TWO ARTISTS' OUTFITS included. State age.

STUDIO 2110P, WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF ART
1115-15th Street, N. W. Washington, D. C.

SHOWS SPORTS IN PICTURES..

- Unusual shots and information on up-and-coming or new sports . . . midget automobile racing, weight-lifting, cricket, acrobatics.
- Action pictures of America's favorite sports.
- Pictures of sports greats on the battlefield and at home.
- You'll find all these in exciting words and pictures in

PIC 10 CENTS A COPY

book or hasn't he?" Murk asked as they left the flat.

Griggs said: "He hasn't got a book. He's got an epic! Why, the damned thing makes me feel like a boy all over again."

Murk said: "You don't look it, even in this pallid dawn."

EVERYTHING was very much over Amos' muddled head. Griggs had taken his manuscript and given him a check, and the check was good. Griggs' press agent took him in tow and watched over him like a vulture. There were interviews and flashlights, and everything that Amos said seemed to be funny as the devil. Kind of doubtfully, he knew that he was suddenly an author, and that the sale of books had a lot to do with publicity.

There was the autumn day when they whisked him in a big expensive car up to Connecticut and turned him loose inside the reconstructed cave. Murk followed with curses and a notebook and listened to Amos wonder at the perfect reconstruction.

There was the kind of funny moment when everybody disappeared, and Amos crawled out of the cave with fresh bewilderment and found Abigail out in front with a dizzy little hat and downcast eyes.

Amos just blinked, and colored, and said: "Abby."

And Abby began to cry and said: "Amos." Neither of them moved.

Murk dashed out of bushes with the press agent and hollered: "That's a hell of a reunion! Clinch and give it some *oomph!*" He shoved them together while cameramen shot pictures.

Then everybody laughed and cracked jokes and left the two of them alone. Abigail cuddled against Amos' shoulder and plucked his lapel timidly.

She said: "It's all right, Amos. Mr.

Griggs explained how it was all a publicity stunt, and they just slipped that money in your pocket without you knowing. I guess I was pretty mean, the way I acted."

Amos said: "Aw, forget it, Abby. But that big liar—"

Abigail said: "Who, Amos?"

Amos thought of trying to explain the thing, and lied hastily. "Murk, he said I wore glasses, and I don't."

She nestled closer against his chest. "Imagine, you being a writer, Amos, and having all that imagination and I never guessed it! They want another book right away."

Amos' brows furrowed with worry. "I don't know what I'm going to do about that, Abby. They want a book on the old Indians who used to live around here. But I didn't really write that book they've got. A kind of friend told it to me. Only nobody will believe me!"

A SHARP, rapid clicking noise brought Abigail stiff and confused from her undignified position. Amos looked around. A man was there—the odd little stranger he had talked with in the park.

The stranger grinned, and the music of running water was in his voice. He chuckled. "My friend, the tommyknockers will believe you!"

Amos felt easy for the first time in weeks. "You think the tommyknockers up here will talk to me?"

The stranger juggled the stones unerringly. "They should. You saved one of them from annihilation! A tommyknocker can't live without his native rock, you know."

Amos grinned. "Then my friend must be here in his old cave!"

The man's eyes shone like coals in the dark. "Very probably!" He reached in his pocket. "I brought you a small present."

He held out something white. Amos took it and looked with something akin to rapture at the meerschaum pipe. He said: "Gee, mister, how can I—"

He looked into the surrounding shadows. He looked at Abby. He said: "That's funny—wonder where he could have gone?"

Abby said superiorly: "Funny-looking little man. You'll have to be more careful about your associates, Amos, now that you're a big author."

Amos just stared ahead. He wondered—no, it was too impossible! But darn it, that was the only man who really believed his story. Or was he *a man?*

Abigail said: "Who's this Tommy Nocker you were talking about, Amos?"

"A friend," Amos murmured softly.

Deep inside the cave there was a chuckling noise, like the rumble of distantly falling stone.

THE END.

The Moving Finger Writes,

---AND HAVING WRIT---

"Symbol is not referrend" means simply that a symbol is not the thing it refers to—a map is not the territory it represents. And thanks for the "jingle."

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Your "symbol is not referrend" brain-teaser puzzles me. I have been unable to find any definition of the word "referrend" in either dictionary or encyclopedia.

I've written a little four-verse jingle about Unknown, and I'd like to inclose it. It may bring a chuckle or two.

UNKNOWN

It's a quaint phantasmagoria
Of disturbing magic lore;
Psychologically it makes you think
Like you've never thunk before.

It's a blend of fact and fancy,
With some humor here and there,
Or a thought that puts that awful
Crawly feeling in your hair.

Though "it's all imagination,"
I can't help but feel a doubt—
But gosh almighty, if it's true
I'd rather not find out.

I don't know why I read the book,
I ought to say "no soap";
Instead I whisper, "There's no ghosts—
I hope, I hope, I hope!"

—R. B. Kimball, 1430 Parkchester Road, New York, N. Y.

Probably if de Camp and Pratt knew details of the spells they'd patent, not write about them!

Dear Mr. Campbell:

With the appearance of another Shea adventure in magic dimensions of the elder worlds of myth, I am far from being satiated with these de Camp-Pratt expeditions into fancy. Instead, I find myself fervently wishing for the further reports of the different trips into the unknown that might be accomplished with the helpful assistance of the authors. Only one fault can I find with "The Mathematics of Magic," and that is the noticeable absence of any detailed explanations of the magical science. The spells were too vague and not as interestingly analyzed as in "Roaring Trumpet." This is a minor detail, though, and possibly I am better off without too intricate theories. Too, the humor was not

as prevalent as in the first yarn, although the sacrificing and pure young wife and the consternation at the girdle-fitting were cleverly portrayed. Also the protective association and guild of wizards.

I like the variety of a chiller one month and humor the next. That should mean that there is something creepy on for September, but unfortunately there was no mention made of the next novel. I do hope it is something terrible. As I knew it would, my unqualified praise of "Fear" seems to have brought the general curse down upon that worthy.

The best novelette Unknown has so far presented, even better than "Black Farm," was "It" by Theodore Sturgeon. Such calm and deliberate horror that ever stalked a dismal forest is this creation, and unequaled in all the annals of this type of literature is this weird creature. The Cartier illustrations did little to ease the consuming horror of it—they were unbelievably graphic and much to the point. (Pause for gentle and subdued tremblings.)

I'm so eager to start Miss O'Hearn's serial because of the fond memories of "Soldiers of the Black Goat," but will I hold out till the last installment arrives? I hope so. "All Roads" was symbolically beautiful and adds another good piece of writing to her list that has "Joker" and others already starred. "Tombi Sink" was strangely disappointing, the reason beyond my grasp.

I wonder if you really know what a superb artist you have in Cartier?—Charles Hidley, New York, N. Y.

Picturing "fantasy" is like trying to draw "loyalty" or "thought."

Dear Editor Campbell:

The purpose of this letter is to tell you that the new change in Unknown is an enjoyable one. It is very probable that the whole future of Unknown will be changed—for the better. It's really much better than any other cover you've had before. As your artists have found out—at least they should have—it is quite impossible to draw a weird, or unknownish, cover. The result, almost every time, is ridiculous. That is why, in the past, even though you have had excellent stories, I have never tried to show Unknown to any of my friends. When I saw the new type of cover on Unknown, I bought several copies and later passed them on to my friends. Already I've been asked why I never showed them Unknown before and if I'll lend them my back issues! So, from now on, the *new* type of cover, please.

(Every leaf of this tiny book (2 by 3 inches) is a tissue of pure, unscented soap)

Tuck it into handbag, purse, pocketbook, pocket, traveling bag or glove compartment of car. A godsend for weekends, camping, picnics, motor trips—or for office workers and salesmen. Men or women who hesitate to use soap in public washstands can now have their individual paper-thin soap always available.

Each soap tissue disintegrates when rubbed between wet hands, making a soft, creamy, luxurious lather which thoroughly cleanses the hands (or face) and does not leave a disagreeable odor.

Be the first to get this sensational convenience for yourself, sweetheart, wife or husband. If unable to obtain at department, drug or chain store, send 25 cents in coin for book of 50 tissues to

HANDY SOAP TISSUE CO.
236 W. 55th St., New York, N. Y.

SELL TIES-OVER 100% PROFIT
TIES 5¢ EACH UP
$1 STARTS YOU IN BUSINESS
SLYDE-ON TIES
Slyde-On Ties, Sample Tie 20c. Doz. $2.00
Silk Lined Ties, Sample Tie 15c. Doz. $1.50
Hand Made Ties, Sample Tie 35c. Doz. $3.60
Custom Made Ties, Sample Tie 20c. ..... Doz. $1.80
Muffler, Tie & Kerchief, Sample 80c. ..... Doz. $8.40
Tie & Kerchief Set, Sample 35c. ..... Doz. $3.60
3 Ties in box with Jewelry Set, Sample 60c. ..... Doz. $6.00
25% deposit, balance C.O.D. Write for FREE Wholesale Catalog.
PHILIP'S NECKWEAR, 20 West 22nd St., Dept. M-32, New York

Classified Advertising

Patents Secured

INVESTORS—Don't delay. Protect your idea with a Patent. Get Free Patent Guide. No charge for preliminary information. Write Clarence A. O'Brien, Registered Patent Attorney, OK51 Adams Building, Washington, D. C.

INVENTORS:—HAVE YOU a sound, practical invention for sale, patented or unpatented? If so, write Chartered Institute of American Inventors, Dept. 42, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS—Reasonable terms. Book and advice free. L. F. Randolph, Dept. 513, Washington, D. C.

Detectives—Instructions

DETECTIVES—SECRET INVESTIGATIONS—TRAINING. Home—Travel—Fingerprints—Particulars Free. Chief Mullica, 577-S Orpheum Building, Jersey City.

DETECTIVES EARN BIG MONEY. WORK HOME. TRAVEL. DETECTIVE particulars free. Experience unnecessary. Write GEORGE WAGONER, 2640-A Broadway, New York.

Old Gold & Money Wanted

GOLD—$35 OUNCE. Ship old gold teeth, crowns, jewelry, watches—receive cash by return mail. Satisfaction Guaranteed. Free information. Paramount Gold Refining Co., 1500-G Hennepin, Minneapolis, Minn.

Photo Finishing—Developing

DOUBLE SIZE PRINTS. Roll developed, 8 prints all enlarged to nearly postcard size, 25c. Willard Studios, Dept. 9, Cleveland, O.

ROLLS DEVELOPED—25c coin. Two 5x7 Double Weight Professional Enlargements, 8 gloss prints. Club Photo Service, Dept. 17, La Crosse, Wis.

Correspondence Courses

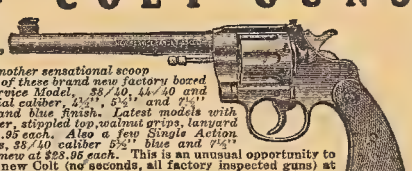
CORRESPONDENCE COURSES and educational books, slightly used. Sold, Rented, Exchanged. All subjects. Satisfaction guaranteed. Cash paid for used courses. Complete details and bargain catalog Free. Nelson Company, 500 Sherman, Dept. K-215, Chicago.

Help Wanted—Instructions

M. M. EARNED $1174 in spare time for exceptional "cellar crop" Snow-King mushrooms! Free Book tells if your cellar, shed suitable. We buy crops. United, 3848 Lincoln Ave., Dept. 532, Chicago.

BIG COLT GUNS

"HOUSE OF HUDSON"



has just made another sensational scoop in the purchase of these brand new factory boxed Colts. New Service Model, .38/.40, .44/.40 and .44 S&W Special caliber, 4½", 5½" and 7½" barrel, nickel and blue finish. Latest models with checkered trigger, stippled top, walnut grips, lanyard ring on butt $26.95 each. Also a few Single Action Frontier Models, .38/.40 caliber 5½" blue and 7½" nickel. Brand new at $23.95 each. This is an unusual opportunity to secure a brand new Colt (no seconds, all factory inspected guns) at less than wholesale cost.

Send for FREE catalog, all standard make guns, scopes, etc.

Stamp please, for each list! Ammunition—Rifles—Shotguns.

HUDSON SPORTING GOODS CO.

K-52 Warren St., ($2 deposit C.O.D.'s) New York

About the stories: I've been much too busy to read the last few issues completely, but here are your best stories: "None But Lucifer," "Death's Deputy," and "Fear," the last two both by L. Ron Hubbard. Hubbard and de Camp are your two best authors. Put me on record as being against N. Page's adventure stories. Bloch's "The Cloak" was easily the best short.

By the way, would it be asking too much, if I pleaded for uniform back-bindings? That may sound silly, but to a collector it means a lot.—Raymond E. Ripa, 100 Warner Street, Newport, R. I.

New term for the use of art critics —"gwup"!

Dear Campbell:

As I am at the moment enjoying bad health—I mean enjoying, literally; my wife loves to spoil me when the good old coryza virus puts me to bed—I shall take time off from calculating ship-damage cards (see "Fletcher's Pratt's Naval War Game") to haul a few more of your unoffending artists over the coals. At least none of them has ever tried to offend me deliberately.

The topic this time will be a quality I shall call "gwup." I invented that word to mean a certain "mysterious something" that some illustrators have and some haven't, and that some of them have now and then. When a picture gives the impression that the illustrator really entered into his work with zest, and really visualized the imaginary scene he depicted, and in addition produced a picture that is technically good and consistent with the story, I say he showed gwup.

As an example of gwup, take most of the illustrations by Cartier and the Isips. The former is probably the more competent artist, and usually shows plenty of gwup. The exceptions are those times when he gets overworked or lazy, and shows all his characters in rear view, with half their bodies hidden by a convenient rock or bush. (Note p. 16 of last December's Unknown and p. 16 of May's.) Hell, even I can draw a good bush or rock, even though I'm more at home with compass, T-square, and engineers' scale than with an artist's outfit. In his pictures for "Lest Darkness Fall," Cartier carried his weakness for short cuts to the point where you finish the story with no idea of what any of the half dozen principal characters in the story look like, except for one picture of Martinus. Personally, I like a look at the chief characters.

The picture for "The Roaring Trumpet" on p. 16 of the May issue, despite the little short cut I mentioned, is otherwise ex-

cellent. Somebody remarked that Odinn looks like The Shadow forty years hence. And for technical skill, note how Cartier got the tenseness of Heimdall's lips in the headpiece for this story. These pictures have plenty of gwup.

But in his pictures for "The Reign of Wizardry," Cartier missed a couple of bets. That may have been due to the fact that the author failed to mention some known features of Minoan costume and custom. For instance, the Cretan sword was a narrow bronze épée, but, strangely enough, seems to have been used for an overhand stab. And the Minoan female costume was very distinctive and not at all like the sample shown on p. 54 of the March issue. The dress had a wasp waist, a voluminous flounced skirt, short sleeves, and a back but no front.

The Isips may show a little less technical skill than Cartier, but they make up for it by lots of gwup. A good example of this is p. 61 of last October's issue; that one picture somehow gives you the "feel" of Stuart's imaginary land. Another example is their pictures for "Knees of the Gods." M. Isip does a mean Greek goddess. Lots of artists could draw pretty girls for this story and call them Greek goddesses, nymphs, et cetera, but Isip, by giving the girls certain subtle facial characters, such as those long, straight, high-bridged noses, and voluptuous figures, has captured the "feel" of Greek mythology. Therefore I say the boys have gwup.

For lack of gwup, see Mr. Kramer. There was nothing in his illustrations for "Sons of the Bear-God" to give one the "feel" of central Asia, and it would have been easy to do—Mongols and such people have been wearing a certain type of costume as far back as there are records. But Mr. Kramer apparently didn't bother to find out. Nor, it seems, has he ever bothered to look at an octopus with an artist's eye. On p. 71 of the April issue I came across a picture of what looked like a beehive with a lot of ropes attached. The caption mentioned an octopus. Careful examination of the picture failed to disclose anything that looked at all like a real octopus, so I regretfully concluded that the beehive-like object was supposed to be it. In a recent *Astounding* Kramer has another picture of an octopus; this one looks like a contact mine with a lot of cables trailing from it. Now, why in the name of all that's holy couldn't he at least look in a dictionary or encyclopedia to see what an octopus looks like?

I've wondered for some time what is wrong with Kramer's pictures. He seems

LAST CALL CLASS C ENTRANTS!

A FEW MORE WINNERS

William Paige, Norristown, Pa.
Bill Harwell, Shreveport, La.
John Harrington, Elm Grove, W. Va.

John Harrington is the new champion of West Virginia. All records established with a Joe Ott plane.

To win a share of $265 in cash and prizes for September

all you have to do is fly a Class C rubber-powered model in a local contest, have the record of the flight attested by the Contest Director and mail it to Street & Smith. The contest closes September 30, 1940, for the following monthly awards:

1st PRIZE—$25.00

2nd PRIZE—$10.00

3rd to 10th PRIZES—Model Kit of the Korda-Wakefield World's Champion Model—Value $1.00 Each

11th to 20th PRIZES—Model Kit of the Cahill-Wakefield World's Champion Model Value $1.00 Each

GET YOUR CLASS C PLANE FREE

With a year's subscription to UNKNOWN we will send you FREE a "Sun Spot," Class C, rubber-powered, 36-inch wing-spread model kit which is now winning many of the prizes. Full details will be mailed you with your model kit.

STREET & SMITH PUBLICATIONS, INC.
Dept. N-N, 79 7th Ave., New York, N. Y.

Inclosed is $2.00 for which kindly send me a year's subscription to UNKNOWN and a "Sun Spot," Class C, rubber-powered, 36-inch wingspread model kit for making the plane which I will enter in the contest for the monthly awards. This offer does not apply to Canada.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....

competent enough in the purely mechanical business of drawing pictures. But they give the impression that he has made little effort to visualize the world of the story, or to look up such things as what an octopus really looks like. Thus while he may be quite capable at depicting ordinary people in familiar surroundings—see his excellent picture on p. 91 of the November issue—he is the worst possible man to illustrate stories of fantasy, science-fiction, or historical adventure. Also his drawing technique gives his pictures an unpleasantly smudged effect. This seems to be the result of too much shading, which doesn't reproduce well when reduced and printed on pulp paper.

Speaking of first century Mongolia and pre-Classical Crete, I did a bit of looking up to see how the stories jibe with what is actually known. The answer is, very badly. If the Yue-Chi in "Sons of the Bear-God" had actually appeared in Buryat when they did, they would have had to march over two thousand miles, traversing the entire length of the powerful Hunnish Empire. And in "The Reign of Wizardry," in addition to the points made above, Williamson stretched the probabilities by introducing a "Northman." At the period of the story, the Scandinavians were, as far as we know, a handful of miserable neolithic clam-diggers huddled on the shores of the Baltic, and the Germans weren't much better off. I also doubt the Cathayan princess; the Chinese were just about emerging from barbarism themselves at this period. —Caleb Northrup, 3809 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, Penn.

Phooey on werewolves, from Wolverine.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

The last six months constitute the length of my acquaintance with Unknown, but plenty of volcanic things have happened to my rather bleary conception of fantasy in that time. I've even reached the stage where I begin to think about writing to the editor, which, of course, is the point where every reader should be either knighted or guillotined.

To the meat of the matter—

"Death's Deputy." The best of Hubbardiana I've seen thus far.

"On the Knees of the Gods." Mythology does not seem to be the ideal medium for Unknown, although in

"The Reign of Wizardry" Jack Williamson makes you like it. In a new medium for him, he scores excellently.

"The Indigestible Triton." Indigestible is as concise a description of this as I can lay my hands on.

"The Roaring Trumpet." The lusty humor of the Norse gods had me guffawing, but the matches would have to light. Like saying, I suppose, that apples didn't fall until after Newton took to watching them.

"But Without Horns." A little-used idea that just misses top rating. Page had so many characters you couldn't see the plot.

"Fear." The author with his hair down. This guy's characters could be casual walking a tight rope across the Grand Canyon with Satan and company holding the ends. Give him an abysmal, miasmic void with stairs and doorways and petulant spirits, and he's away. Rats will eat you, L. Ron Hubbard!

Shorts.

"The African Trick." Guernsey really has it. And in,

"He Shuttles," Sturgeon also has it. These are your smash-hit artists in the short field. The latter's combination of brisk flippancy and fatalism is delicious.

"Mad Hatter"—still another top-ranker, which seems to indicate that shorts lend themselves more fluently to Unknown's recipe than vast fifty-thousand-word extravaganzas. A triumph of whacky tomfoolery.

"Master Gerald of Cambray." Can this be Schachner? How nice to have a story plotted on the receiving end of a time traveling hiatus without benefit of four-dimensional lenses, temporal abberrators, rotated geodesics or warped continuums. (Continuua?) As anyone who has ever tried to write stf or fantasy, and skirted madness thereby, knows, time travel is the trickiest, most exasperatingly treacherous medium known to man.

"The Dream." Here is a lady with the deft touch of a Sturgeon, the chatty characters of a Wallace West, and the mood of a Lovecraft. Yoicks! Jane Rice, ladle us up another serving, please.

"Gateway." Darn it! Why didn't he go through?

"The Pipes of Pan." Lester's best since "The Day Is Done" in *Astounding*. A gratifying twist on an already overworked mythological angle.

The new cover looks good—much better, at least, than Cartier's hollow-cheeked, straw-haired humans, and his triangular eyed abstractions.

And phooey on werewolves.

Finally, I'll not lay about me with scores of wheezy expressions meaning "swell." Instead, I'll just say that "It" approaches a sheer perfection of horror that can't be analyzed or described. You can only read it, then move closer the fire and thaw out your marrow. The indefinable Sturgeon touch—that odd blend of once-upon-a-time and madcap daffiness and utter inevitability of purpose that made "Derm Fool" and "He Shuttles" unforgettable—reaches its peak in "It." Unknown's and Sturgeon's best.

De Camp and Pratt have Shea dancing to a better tune in "The Mathematics of Magic" than in ye "Roaring Trumpet." L. Sprague's windy tendency was apparently beaten back. There was more humor and no slow spots. The repartee was delicious, and the aërial encounter with Busyrane and his wivern simply prostrating.

Cartier, however, could be a mite more careful with his people. Notice page 29. Bad as the Losel was, I think Chalmers could have stood still and ogred him down. —Bill Brudy, Wolverine, Michigan.

Hm-m-m—you mean Unknown needs more "It," so to speak?

Dear Mr. Campbell:

I am new to Unknown and Unknown is new to me. But we are by no means strangers. Having bought up all the back issues of Unknown, I have been reading them as fast as the law allows. I have read all but eight of your publications cover to cover.

The first Unknown I read was "Fear." It seemed to grip me and *hold* my faculties until I had finished it. Turning a few pages, I read "The Dream" and that increased the tightening hold. "Fisherman's Luck" gave me a quick breather. Then came the climax. I tightened even more than at first, for I read "It."

L. Ron Hubbard and L. Sprague de Camp seem to impress me, as far as the longer stories are concerned. But for the short stories, it's anybody's race. By that I mean anyone who can make me feel as though the grip is tightening.

I hope that Unknown will not have cause to weaken the grip which it has woven about me.

Let's have more stories like "It" and "The Dream."

Keep up the good work, Mr. Campbell, and don't let the grip relax for even an instant.

Constantly yours, till the Ghouls get me. —Wally Frisvold, 1051 Stannage Avenue, Albany, California.

HOME-STUDY BRINGS BIGGER PAY

Don't be caught napping when Opportunity knocks. Prepare for advancement and more money by training *now* for the job ahead. *Free 48-Page Books Tell How.* Write for the book on the business field you like —or mail us this ad with your name and address in the margin. *Now*, please.

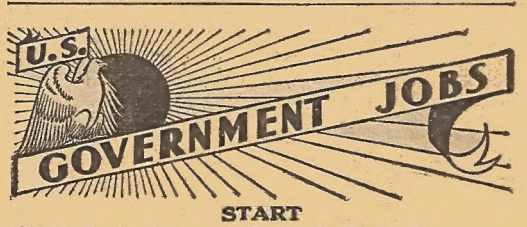
☐Higher Accountancy ☐Business Management
☐Salesmanship ☐Business Corres.
☐Traffic Management ☐Credit and Collection Correspondence
☐Law—Degree of LL.B. ☐Modern Foremanship
☐Commercial Law ☐Expert Bookkeeping
☐Industrial Management ☐C.P.A. Coaching
☐Stenotypy ☐Effective Speaking

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY
A Correspondence Institution
Dept. 965-R Chicago

MAKE MORE MONEY
Taking Orders For The NIMROD Line
Earn more every day in the year representing old established firm with a complete line of fast selling necessities: Shirts, Ties, Underwear, Hosiery, Pajamas, Raincoats, Sweaters, Jackets, Campus Coats, Pants, Belts, Breeches, Shoes, Coveralls, Shop Coats, Uniforms, etc. Every item guaranteed. Experience unnecessary.
Write quick for FREE SALES EQUIPMENT
NIMROD COMPANY,
4922-BN Lincoln Ave., Chicago, Ill.

TYPEWRITER 1/3 PRICE
STANDARD OFFICE MODELS
1/3 MFRS. ORIG. PRICE
Easiest Terms as Low as 60¢ A WEEK
All late models completely rebuilt like brand new. FULLY GUARANTEED.
No Money Down - 10 Day Trial
Free price-smashing catalog shows all makes in colors. FREE COURSE IN TYPING INCLUDED. See catalog before you buy. SEND NOW.
INTERNATIONAL TYPEWRITER EXCH.
Dept. 912 231 W. Monroe St., Chicago, Ill.

MAN WANTED
HANDLE ONE OF OUR BIG PAY ROUTES
Sell to Stores on New Plan
Carry a complete "Wholesale Supply House" in your hand. Let us start you making Big Money in permanent business of your own. Show Storekeepers in every business how to DOUBLE profits on Nationally Advertised Goods. Over 200 Products. No experience needed. We supply everything. Free Book gives amazing facts.
World's Products Co., Dept. 61-C, Spencer, Ind.



START
$1260 to $2100 Year
Men—Women
Many appointments each year.
Qualify Now.
Mail Coupon Today SURE.

COUPON

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE,
Dept. H194, Rochester, N. Y.
Sirs: Rush to me without charge (1) 32-page book with list of many U. S. Government Big Pay Jobs. (2) Tell me how to qualify for one of these jobs.

Name.....
Address.....

PARTIAL CONTENTS

Air Pistols
Alligators
Archery Sets
Banks & Vaults
Barometers
Bicycle Ornaments
Billfolds & Coin Purses
Boats
Books for Lovers
Books on Ventriloquism
Candid Cameras
Chameleons
Chemistry & Scientific Sets
Cigarette Cases
Coin Checks
Cowboy Novelties
Curious Seeds
Disguises
Electrical Appliances
Electric Baseball Game
Electric Eye
Electric Pants Presser
Electric Tie Presser
Electric Trains
Electro-Platers
Exercisers
Exploding Jokers
Fencing Supplies
Field Glasses
Firearms and Rifles
Fireworks
Fishing Supplies
Fortune Tellers
Games of Chance
Hobbies
Home Workshop Tools
Hula Hula Skirts
Hunting Knives
Hypnotism Books
Indian Novelties
Indoor Games
Inkless Fountain Pen
Jewelry
Key Checks
Kits
Live Animals
Live Ant Villages
Locks
Magic Tricks
Make Up Goods
Marriage License 10c
Microscopes
Model Airplanes
Muscle Developers
Musical Novelties
Novel Rings
Novelty Clocks
Occult Novelties
Office Time Savers
Oriental Novelties
Over 300 6c Books
Pennants, Awards
Pipes
Pocket Adding Machines
Portable Radios, 69c Up
Press Cards
Printing Presses
Projectors & Films
Puzzle Money Boxes
Puzzles
Radios & Supplies
Read-The-Back Cards
Religious Articles
Rubber Stamps
Secret Money Belts
Sex Books
Skeleton Keys
Slide Rules
Smokers' Novelties
Spiritualistic Novelties
Sporting Goods
Stamps
Sweater Emblems
Symbol Jewelry
Telegraph Sets, 15c up
Telescopes
Transmitters
Turtles
39c Typewriter
Watches
Weird & Mystic Articles
Wigs

READY! 1941 edition of this MAMMOTH Catalog of 9000 NOVELTIES

* 628 PAGES! No other Catalog Like It! * 5000 ILLUSTRATIONS
* 6-Color Cover * 48 Page Rotogravure Section

World's Greatest Collection of Novelties

Its wonders will hold your interest and fascination for hours. If you've never had one of these remarkable catalogs in your hands, don't wait another minute before you send for it!

Items From All Corners of the World

JOHNSON SMITH & CO.
Dept. 529, DETROIT, MICH.

NOTHING ELSE QUITE LIKE IT!

Articles more interesting than a world's fair! Over 600 pages packed full of pictures and descriptions of odd items from all parts of the world—amusing, entertaining and useful articles some of which you never knew existed—hundreds of items not sold in stores—dozens of things you've always wanted but never knew where to find. They're all in this amazing NEW catalog. 9,000 different articles, 5,000 illustrations. Most complete catalog of its kind. Latest radio and hobby kits, newest styles of candid type cameras, fortune tellers, guns and rifles, sporting goods, books, seeds, weird occult novelties, strange postage stamps, disguises, live reptiles, etc., etc., in fact thousands of all the latest novelties, many unobtainable elsewhere. Many items brought from strange lands — from strange people. It's the greatest collection of unusual things in the world. Read it—study it—you'll be amazed—and pleased.

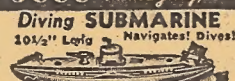
Rush the Coupon

Just 3 Of The 9000 Amazing, Amusing Novelties

JACKASS CIGARET DISPENSER

Nod of the head and out comes a cigaret—under the tail! Great laugh producer and practical cigaret dispenser. Holds 10 cigarets. Finished wood, movable head and tail. Old Hill Billy Mose sits on Jackass with ear of corn likker. Colorfully designed. Great for den or office. 7½-in. high. Each in box. Postpaid . . . **69c**

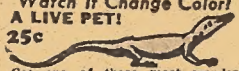
Diving SUBMARINE



Dives or rides on and under water. Will dive then come up. Adjustable diving fins. Ice breaker. Rudder. Adjustable ballast chamber. Powerful driving motor. Natural sea colors, realistic looking, 10½-in. long. Complete right down to small details. All metal enamel construction. Speedy. Postpaid **$1.19**

LIVE CHAMELEON

Watch It Change Color!
A LIVE PET!
25c



Get one of these most wonderful creatures. Watch it change color. Study its habits. Wear one in the lapel of your coat as a curiosity. Shoots out its tongue to catch flies and insects for food. Can go for months without food. Almost four inches long. Live delivery guaranteed. Price Postpaid **25c**

PUT REAL "LIFE" INTO YOUR NEXT PARTY WITH THESE FUNMAKERS!

Go thru your catalog when it arrives. Pick out a half dozen fun makers and put them to work at your party. **"BINGO"** shooters placed under telephones, plates, etc., explode violently but harmlessly. **Auto Bombs, "Electric" Hand Shaker and Tickler, Trick Cards, Nudies Glasses, etc., etc.** With some of the articles you'll find in this catalog you can put on a surprise party that will amaze even the wiliest guest! Be prepared—get your copy of this big, new flashy and amazing catalog right away. Magazines and newspapers have praised this unusual catalog. **Tide** and **New Yorker,** "Most unusual catalog ever seen." **Coronet,** "In this industry, Johnson Smith & Co. is supreme." Over 25,000,000 customers is your guarantee of service and satisfaction!

Here Are the Answers to Some of Your Questions About This Big Book!

Is It a Catalog?

YES—but it's the most wonderful catalog you've ever held in your hands. You'll be amazed and amused at the novelties, the useful time savers. It's more than a catalog it's an encyclopedia of hundreds of things you can't find elsewhere.

Are the Articles Expensive?

NO—most articles are less than $1.00; thousands actually 25c and lower. Yet it covers a wide range of goods.

Is There Something to Interest Me?

YOU BET! We'll guarantee that you'll find plenty of interesting articles you've never seen before. Many people actually spend days looking at this interesting book.

Why Do I Send 3c?

To absolutely limit the number of copies to those most interested; to help prevent more than one catalog from going to each person.

This is, actually, less than 1-10th of our cost. From start to finish, we spend nearly 50c for each copy sent out!

What Obligation Is There?

Absolutely none! You need buy nothing at all from this catalog. BUT, it pays us to send you this catalog because most people like to keep it, and order from it. Sooner or later, we've found, they see something they want—and we get their order!

SEND ONLY 3c — ACTUALLY LESS THAN ONE-TENTH OUR COST!

Send just 3c (or 15c for DeLuxe cloth bound edition) and our new catalog will be sent to you immediately. A great big mammoth catalog of 628 pages—rotogravure section—6 color cover—9,000 amazing novelties—over 5,000 illustrations! Send 3c in any convenient form—unused U.S. postage stamps accepted—and we'll do the rest! Use coupon below so you'll be sure to get the new, 1941 edition!

DeLuxe Cloth Bound Edition 15c

DeLuxe Edition with permanent hard cloth binding suitable for adding to your library is available for only 15c. Lasts longer. Looks better.

Ready For Distribution

YES! I Want Your 1941 CATALOG! Rush It To Me!

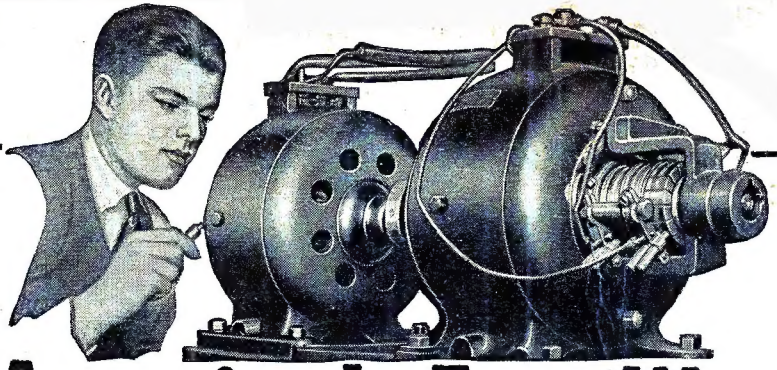
Johnson Smith & Company, Dept. 541, Detroit, Michigan

☐ *Here's 3c, Rush 628 Page 1941 Catalog.* ☐ *Here's 15c, Rush DeLuxe Edition*

RUSH COUPON!

Name_____ **Address**_____

96 Page Supplementary Catalog of 1,900 Articles Sent FREE Upon Request. Just Send a Postcard.



Amazingly Easy Way to get into ELECTRICITY

I'LL FINANCE YOUR TRAINING

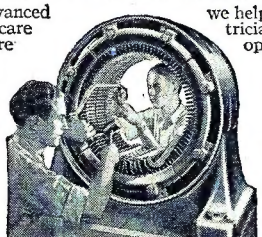
Don't spend your life hoping for a better job and a better salary. *Let me show you how to train for positions that lead to $35.00, $40.00 a week and up in the great field of Electricity.* NOT by correspondence but by actual shop work right on real electrical machinery. Then on my "PAY AFTER GRADUATION" PLAN YOU CAN PAY YOUR TUITION AFTER YOUR TRAINING PERIOD IS OVER IN EASY MONTHLY PAYMENTS.

Learn Without Books in 90 DAYS

Lack of experience—age, or advanced education bars no one. I don't care if you don't know an armature from an air brake—I don't expect you to! It makes no difference! Don't let lack of money stop you. Most of the men at Coyne have no more money than you have. That's why I have worked out my astonishing offers.

Earn While Learning

If you need part-time work to help pay your living expenses I'll help you get it. Then, in 12 brief weeks, in the great roaring shops of Coyne, I train you as you never dreamed you could be trained...on one of the greatest outlays of electrical apparatus ever assembled . . . real dynamos, engines, power plants, autos, switchboards, transmitting stations...everything from doorbells to farm power and lighting . . . full-sized . . . in full operation every day!



PREPARE FOR JOBS LIKE THESE

Our Employment Bureau for graduates gives FREE lifetime employment service.

Armature Winder
Sub-Station Operator
Auto & Aviation Ignition
Maintenance Electrician
Service Station Owner
Air Conditioning
Electric Refrigeration
Radio Servicing
and many others

we help to make you a master electrician so you can cash in on the opportunities ahead.

Jobs, Pay, Future

To get a good job today you've got to be trained. Industry demands men who have specialized training. These men will be the ones who are the big-pay men of the future. After graduation my Employment Department gives you Lifetime Employment Service. J. O. Whitmeyer says: "After I graduated, the School Employment Service furnished me with a list of several positions . . . I secured a position with an Electrical Construction Company, paying me 3 to 4 times more a week than I was getting before I entered Coyne and today I am still climbing to higher pay."

Get the Facts

Coyne is your one great chance to get into electricity. Every obstacle is removed. This school is 40 years old—Coyne training is tested and proven. You can get training first—then pay for it in easy monthly payments after you graduate. You can find out everything absolutely free. Simply mail the coupon and let me send you the big, free Coyne book ...facts...jobs...salaries...opportunities. This does not obligate you. So act at once. Just mail coupon.

RADIO

Right now I'm including an extra 4 weeks' Radio Course at no extra tuition charge.

Get this FREE Book

No Books—No Classes

No dull books, no baffling charts, no classes, you get individual training . . . all real actual work . . . building real batteries . . . winding real armatures, operating real motors, dynamos and generators, wiring houses, etc., etc. That's a glimpse of how we help you.

THE HOME OF COYNE

This is our fireproof, modern home wherein is installed thousands of dollars' worth of the newest and most modern Electrical equipment of all kinds. Every comfort and convenience has been arranged to make you happy and contented during your training.

H. C. LEWIS, Pres.
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL, DEPT. 51-45
500 S. Paulina Street, Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Lewis:

Without obligation send me your big free catalog and all details of Free Employment Service, the **4 weeks Radio Course** and **how you will finance my tuition** and how I can "earn while learning." I understand I will not be bothered by any salesman.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....*State*.....

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
H. C. Lewis, Pres., Dept. 51-45
500 S. Paulina St. Founded 1899 CHICAGO, ILL.

Chewing refreshing Wrigley's Spearmint fits right in with your daily life.

Tastes good wherever you are and adds fun to whatever you do.

Buy some today.

The Flavor Lasts

V-47